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## NEW LAMPS AND ANCIENT LIGHTS

*Also by J. A. Spender*

THE COMMENTS OF BAGSHOT

MEN AND THINGS

FIFTY YEARS OF EUROPE

GREAT BRITAIN (EMPIRE AND COMMONWEALTH)

A SHORT HISTORY OF OUR TIMES

THE GOVERNMENT OF MANKIND

THE CHANGING EAST

# NEW LAMPS AND ANCIENT LIGHTS

by  
J. A. SPENDER



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## P R E F A C E

I HAD prepared for publication in the year 1939 a collection of essays and short pieces in continuation of a collection of the same kind published under the title of "Men and Things" in 1937. The coming of war required me to revise this scheme. Some of my pieces touched old controversies better adjourned until peace comes, and for these I have substituted new chapters which, though in a sense controversial, raise only such issues as lie at the roots of all great affairs. But others seemed to me harmless diversions of a kind which may even serve a purpose in these anxious times. They are, frankly, "ivory towers," or in the fashionable terminology, "ways of escape" from the realities which are too heavy a load to carry at all hours. These I have kept as in the book originally planned.

Nothing in this book has been published before except the three chapters headed "Portraits and Reminiscences." The chapter on Gladstone has been published as a pamphlet by the National Liberal Club ; that on Lord Morley appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* in December, 1938, and the other short pieces at various dates in the *Sunday Times* and *Spectator*.

The medley of old and new things contained in this book is, I hope, sufficiently indicated in its title.

J. A. S.

*Warren End, Farnborough, Kent.*



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PART I  
RIGHTS AND WRONGS



# NEW LAMPS AND ANCIENT LIGHTS

## CHAPTER I

### THE IDEAL AND THE REAL

#### I

I HAVE been reading a little book entitled "Spiritual Values and World Affairs" by Sir Alfred Zimmern, the Professor of International Relations in the University of Oxford, and it has started my thoughts on what is perhaps the central issue in the present war. Can we make international morality conform to the ideas of good conduct which we all acknowledge, however much we fall short of them, in our private lives, or must we resign ourselves to the clean cut between the two kinds of morality which has been so horrifyingly illustrated in recent years?

Sir Alfred's chief object is to give practical advice to ministers of religion about the way to behave when they mix themselves up in secular affairs. This is not a mere "don't," for that would be to concede the devil's doctrine that politics have nothing to do with religion. It is on the contrary "play your part but, when you do, be sure you know what you are doing. Otherwise you will be defeated by the secular politicians and you may even find that you are espousing what, from your point of view, is the worse cause and throwing the cloak of religion over the machinations of sinful men." Sir Alfred gives interesting and even

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amusing examples of how bishops and other holy men have been used in this way.

Yet that they should persevere in spite of these discouragements is, I am sure, the right conclusion. They will, of course, incur the displeasure which falls upon all who have a professional duty to improve their fellow-beings. "Who will rid me of this priest?" is a cry which has rung through the ages. Ecclesiastical politicians, exponents of the Nonconformist conscience, and other officials of morality have incurred a rather special odium in my lifetime, and I am glad to think that, as a journalist, I have never joined in rebuking them on the ground of their calling. They also are God's creatures, and they have the same right as the rest of us to intervene in secular affairs, and, on some occasions, a rather special duty. But when they do intervene, they must be prepared for the same buffeting as ordinary lay politicians, and had better make sure that they are as well-informed about the matters in debate as their secular critics. To one secular politician the light-heartedness with which high ecclesiastics and leaders of Nonconformity lend their signatures to letters to the Press advocating dubious and difficult policies is a constant surprise.

The gist of what Sir Alfred has to say is that the spiritual world and the political world have each a logic of their own and that in the political world things as a rule are by no means so simple as they seem to those who live in the spiritual world. In the spiritual world good is good and evil is evil, and there can be no paltering with evil; in the political world things shade imperceptibly from black to white and flicker between the two. The problem for the secular politician is very often a choice of evils and a large part of his wisdom consists, as Burke said, in knowing how much of an evil it may be necessary to tolerate, lest worst evil befall. In the spiritual world *fiat justitia, ruat cælum*;

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in the political world it is folly and wickedness to bring down the heavens in ruin upon the heads of (mostly) unoffending people, however good the cause. The politician has to consider the consequences of every step, and some of the best steps seem to lead to the worst consequences. Will he, in trying to redress one wrong, create other and worse wrongs? May he not even aggravate mischief by unavailing protests which he is unable to make good? One thinks in this connection of the unfortunate labourer whose cause was espoused by Don Quixote. Having poured out his wrath upon the labourer's master, the Don went his way, full of pride in his exploit. But in the end the labourer was left weeping, for while the Don passed on, "the master remained behind" and vented his wrath on the labourer. "In this manner," says the author, "the valorous Don Quixote redressed that wrong."

## II

Sir Alfred very acutely examines the casuistry of a subject which has troubled the conscience of mankind since the beginning of history. How shall a good man make his peace with a bad government? It is not the only question. We hear also the complaint of the good ruler against a bad people. This is the testament to his son and heir, somewhere about 2000 B.C., of Amenemhet, the founder of the twelfth dynasty in Egypt:—

Hearken to that which I say to thee,  
That thou mayest be King of the land,  
That thou mayest be ruler of the shores,  
That thou mayest increase good.  
Harden thyself against all subordinates.  
The people give heed to him who terrorizes them.  
Approach them not alone,  
Fill not thy heart with a brother,

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Know not a friend,  
Nor make for thyself intimates  
Wherein there is no end.  
When thou sleepest, guard for thyself thine own heart ;  
For a man has not people  
In the day of evil.  
I gave to the beggar, I nourished the orphan ;  
I admitted the insignificant as well as him who was of  
great account.  
But he who ate my food made insurrection ;  
He to whom I gave my hand aroused fear therein !

The rights are not all on one side. The ruler too has something to say for himself when arraigned at the bar of history. Government is not quite the easy job that the arraigners of princes are apt to assume.

But the more familiar complaint is that of the good man in the bad State. Plato seems to say that though there may be bad men in a good State there can scarcely be a completely good man in a bad State. But suppose such a man is found. What is his duty ? Shall he protest or conform, and, if he conforms, in what way ? Wrap his cloak round him, like Plato's philosopher, and take shelter against a wall in the hope that the storm may pass ? Fly to a monastery and trust that the evil which he does not resist will flee from *him*, though it overtakes other people ? The saints of the desert, the sect of Premonstratensians which, as he tells us, Sir Alfred Zimmern discovered the other day in the Pyrenees, the Trappists and some other strict monastic orders favour the last solution. To do them justice, some of these are persuaded that they can combine the business of saving their own souls with that of saving their neighbours by prayer and intercession. They are in this way working hard for the world from which they seem to be fleeing.

<sup>1</sup> Breasted, "Dawn of Conscience," page 205.

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### III

In the autumn of 1935 a distinguished ecclesiastic made a speech in which he denounced the Italian attack on Abyssinia as a moral wrong which we were under a duty to prevent and punish. He compared Italy to a house-breaker and Great Britain to a policeman whose duty it was to arrest and imprison the housebreaker. But at the end of his speech he added, apparently as an afterthought, that since there were other policemen, i.e. other members of the League of Nations, who were under an equal obligation to act, we should not be obliged to act alone if they refused to do their duty.

If the problem was rightly stated in terms of moral duty the conclusion was at least extremely doubtful. The policeman is not absolved from trying to arrest the burglar because he thinks the burglar will be too strong for him. He must make the effort and trust to any other policeman or any member of the public who may be within call to come to his assistance. If a State is justified in standing aloof on such an occasion, it is because the policeman-burglar analogy does not fit the case and more harm than good would come from trying to make it fit. Questions of right and wrong arise between a Government and its own subjects as well as between one Government and another. An individual has the right, and may have the duty, to sacrifice himself for a cause. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. But a Government is not an individual ; it is the trustee for a great number of individuals, some of whom may not believe in the cause or believe in it sufficiently to be willing to offer themselves as a sacrifice for it. A Government, therefore, has to make sure that it is authorized by its subjects before it risks their welfare and probably the lives of a great many of them in a particular cause.

It must also, if there is a risk of war, make reasonably sure that it can make war successfully. It may, of course, since war brings incalculable hazards, prove wrong, but so much is its duty. The wreck of an ideal cause on a miscalculation of material forces is perhaps the greatest of secular catastrophes. It increases the sum of wrong and injustice in the world. A sufficient exercise of prudence for its avoidance is incumbent on all Governments.

Can it justly be said that a Government which exercises this degree of prudence is condoning what it is unable, or thinks itself unable, to prevent? When the British White Paper on the atrocities in German prison camps was published, certain of Mr. Chamberlain's critics turned on him and said that the publication proved him to have known of and therefore to have condoned these atrocities. They argued that if he knew, he was bound to take steps—which could only have been to go to war—to prevent them, and that if he did not take such steps or take them immediately he must be held to have shared in the guilt of those who perpetrated them. Explanations which suggested that he was acting from prudence, discretion or expediency were ruled out. They only proved that he was an "unprincipled man."

The case was carried even further by a zealous and very honest idealist, Mr. Vernon Bartlett, who argued after the war had broken out (*News Chronicle*, November 21, 1939) that the British Government would be acting basely if in the case of Japan and China it "found excuses as it found excuses in Spain and Czechoslovakia, Abyssinia and Albania to argue that it must accept things as they are and compound one more felony in its desire rather to maintain aggressor administrations in power than to see them founder in the uncertainties of revolution." The ascription of this far-fetched motive to a British Government in its Chinese policy is characteristic of this writer's school of thought,

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but that is not the immediate point. Whatever its motive, the Government would, in his opinion, be "compounding a felony" if for the time being it was unable to resist some accomplished fact assumed to be prejudicial to the independence of China.

That is to say, if in the middle of its war with Germany the British Government did not take action which would almost certainly embroil it with Japan, it must be assumed to approve, condone and compound the felony which Japan, in the writer's view, is perpetrating on China, just as, on the same supposition, it compounded similar felonies in Spain, Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia and Albania. The Government is not to be allowed to plead that its hands are full with the war which it is waging to arrest the German felon; it is required to commit what on all practical grounds would be the gross imprudence of risking a war in the Far East in addition to its war in Europe.

## IV

I myself am one of a large number who sympathized successively with the cause of China against Japan, Abyssinia against Italy, Republican Spain against its assailants, Czechoslovakia against Germany. But when it became clear that collective action could not be relied upon and that in most if not all these cases Britain and Britain alone would have to bear the brunt of any punitive measures, I was strongly of opinion that we should reserve our action until we were reasonably sure that we were in a position to act powerfully. Am I therefore to be told that I share with the Government the guilt of "compounding felony"? If this is really the true doctrine; if the support of ideal causes does not permit even a choice of times and seasons; if it does not allow a weighing of the chances and probabilities

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in the event of war, then good as it may be for the soul, it will certainly come to catastrophe in this mortal life. A doctrine which exposes the practice of virtue in international affairs to this consequence assuredly needs very careful examination.

If it is true, a Government faced with the wrong-doing of other Governments is debarred from even such moderate worldly wisdom as seems to be permitted in the Christian gospels. It may not sit down and count the cost like the King going to war in the gospel parable ; it must never add the wisdom of the serpent to the harmlessness of the dove ; it must on no account settle with an adversary quickly, if it judges the adversary to be a wrong-doer. The children of light must never be as wise in their generation as the children of this world. They must yield all the advantages on the material plane to the children of this world—throw the compass overboard and steer by the stars.

Perverse as the nature of things may be I cannot believe it to be so perverse as to require the champions of good causes to commit suicide in the manner suggested. The idea is a new one. Until quite recent times it was supposed to be the first duty of Governments in international affairs to keep their action or their threats to act within the limits of their power. The late Lord Salisbury used to make a clean breast of it. To those who were righteously, and rightly, indignant about the horrible massacres of his Christian subjects by the Sultan of Turkey, he said that he entirely shared their feelings, but, since the British fleet could not cross the Taurus mountains, he could do nothing but consign the Sultan to the judgment of Almighty God, who would surely punish him.

In the state of semi-war in which Europe has been living in recent years, no Government has thought it prudent to admit the limitations of its power, even when they were obvious to all beholders. This has been one of the curses

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of modern diplomacy, and it has led to a great economy of truth by well-meaning Governments and an embarrassing amount of prevarication on the part of men who were fundamentally honest and sincere. To create an atmosphere in which a frank interchange of views is possible is one of the conditions of lasting peace.

### v

The question which Sir Alfred Zimmern raises is the greatest of all the issues of history: Is there a standard of conduct by which States and nations are bound, as in all ages individuals have considered themselves bound, whether the standard is the tribal tabu or the high doctrine of the Christian religion? The Jewish prophets are not in doubt about the answer. They conceive of the whole nation as a religious unit, and insist that not merely individuals but the entire community owes obedience to the divine command.<sup>1</sup> But this apparently did not carry with it the duty of any behaviour that can be called religious, or that a modern would call righteous, to other than the Chosen People. On the contrary the vindication of the true God, Who was also a jealous God, was held to justify all ruthlessness against the worshippers of false gods.

Similarly in Greek thought the "barbarian" is outside the pale within which conduct that a modern would call "humanitarian" is held to be a duty. But even as between Greek and Greek the nature of "justice" as practised by man to man, or by State to State, is perpetually in debate. It is the theme of a large part of the first book of Plato's Republic; the theme, we may say, which runs

<sup>1</sup> See Robertson Smith, "The Prophets of Israel and Their Place in History," page 21.

through the whole story of the Peloponnesian war as told by Thucydides. The terrible dialogue in which the people of Melos argue with the Athenians who had them at their mercy, raises in its most tragic form the question whether might is not right—whether the weak have any rights against the strong, or a strong State any duty to spare a weak State which has incurred its hostility. “We both alike know,” say the Athenians, “that into the discussion of human affairs the question of justice only enters where the pressure of necessity is equal, and that the powerful exact what they can and the weak grant what they must.” Nevertheless, reply the Melians, “it is expedient that you should respect a principle which is for the common good; and that to every man when in peril, a reasonable claim should be accounted a claim of right . . . Your interest in this principle is quite as great as ours inasmuch as you, if you fall, will incur the heaviest vengeance, and will be the most terrible example to mankind.” This, say the Athenians, is “a danger which you may leave to us. We are considering only the interests of our Empire and the terms on which we may avoid the destruction of your city.”

The Melians persist in their appeal to the higher powers. “We hope to stand as high as you in the favour of heaven because we are righteous, and you—against whom we contend—are unrighteous.” Nay, say the Athenians, if the appeal is to the Gods, “we expect to have quite as much of their favour as you, for we are not doing or claiming anything which goes beyond common opinion about divine or men’s desires about human things. For of our gods we believe—and of men we know—that by a law of their nature wherever they can rule they will. This law was not made by us, and we are not the first who have acted upon it; we did but inherit it and we shall bequeath it to all time, and we know that you and all mankind—if you were as strong as we are—would do as we do” (Thuc. v.

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Jowett's translation). This might almost be a dialogue between Germans and Czechs, or Russians and Finns.

The Melians were obdurate, and a few months later even plucked up courage to attack Athens and captured a part of its wall. The Athenians now sent an expedition to invest the Island, and compelled it to surrender. "The Athenians, thereupon, put to death all who were of military age, and made slaves of the women and children. They then colonized the island, sending thither five hundred settlers of their own."

There is much that a modern would call pacifism in Euripides and Aristophanes, but the Greeks in general had no conscientious objections to making war on one another. The national industry of Sparta was war; her men, women and children were all to be educated and hardened for war. Nor did Athens greatly differ in this respect. Even the gentle Plato says that parents should take their children to look on at a battle just as potters' boys are taken to look on at a wheel.

Rome evolved a morality of common sense in dealing with conquered peoples. To leave them alone as far as possible and let them govern themselves under her supervision was, she discovered, the most convenient way for a conquering power. For this she claimed a certain credit on humanitarian grounds. Her policy was, in the words of her poet, *Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos*, but the emphasis must be laid even more on the *debellare* than on the *parcere*. She had no scruple about using the utmost ruthlessness upon those who got in her way, whether they might be called proud or humble. Yet as between men and men, the moral sense is very much alive in Latin literature. Cicero is a fervent moralist. Tacitus and Juvenal scorch with their anger at outraged morality. The sense of sin and the desire to be purified were powerful motives in the mystery religions.

Nevertheless, it was Christianity which raised the issue in the form in which it is now debated. Could a Christian be a good citizen of the Roman state? Not, was the answer, if he was required to burn incense to the Emperor and so to acknowledge him as God. This was rendering unto Cæsar the things that were God's. When the Emperor himself became a Christian that test was removed, but another very soon took its place. Could a Christian who sincerely believed in the doctrine of the gospel serve as a soldier in the Christian state? St. Paulinus said no, the soldier was a mere shedder of blood doomed to eternal torment. But he said a great deal more than this. He said that Christian obedience was totally incompatible with the duties of citizenship and the relations of family life. The love of father or mother, of wife or child, the desire for riches and honour, devotion to country were all so many barriers to keep the soul from Christ.<sup>1</sup> The dreadful corruption of fourth-century Rome gave a strong impulse to this teaching, and drove thousands to monasteries amid the execration of the Pagan nobility. It was the charge of the old Pagans that by dividing the Roman state and undermining its manhood, the Christians had brought down on it the great catastrophe of the sack of the city; and it was this charge which St. Augustine set himself to meet in his great book the "De Civitate Dei."

## VI

The importance of that book is not in its answer to this indictment, but in its serious effort to define the relations of the city of God and the city of Cæsar. There is much debate about the interpretation of certain parts of it, but

<sup>1</sup> Dill, "Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire," page 11.

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there is no doubt about the principle which it lays down. The city of God and the worldly State must keep touch with one another, and though the latter will reflect the imperfections of the earthly life, it must always be brought into judgment by comparison with the standards of the heavenly state. Order there must be, and justice in the earthly life—for “take away justice, and what are the Kingdoms of the earth but great bands of robbers?”—but the earthly virtues and values are tainted with the alloys of sin and selfishness, whereas in the heavenly there is only one object of love, and that is the universal good.

St. Augustine settled the main issue for a thousand years. It was agreed that, differ as they might in degree, the morality of the earthly state and that of the heavenly city were ultimately one. The state in its public action dared profess no different code from that of the Christian in his daily life. The Middle Ages took much of the mystical element out of St. Augustine's idea by identifying his city of God with the actual hierarchical Church, a modification which led to the dualism of the Holy Roman Empire, the Church being in theory charged with the spiritual and the Empire with the secular government of the world. It was in theory a partnership in which the two should have kept step, but it became in fact a ruinous competition between the two powers, in which the spiritual was much more often swamped by the secular than the secular redeemed by the spiritual. Nevertheless, through it all the doctrine was maintained that the secular Government *ought* to conform to the Christian standard.

Then comes Machiavelli making, I suppose, the completest breach with the past that is recorded in the history of thought. In his “Prince”—though not quite to the same extent in his “Discourses”—Machiavelli turns his back on the entire mediæval theory and expounds a new

doctrine of power-politics, as if it were self-evident and needed no argument. Away into space go the City of God, the Holy Roman Empire, the ideal monarchy of Dante, the teaching of St. Thomas of Aquinas that Government is subservient to the divine purpose whereby God rules the world and ordains the good life for his creatures through their co-operation. The purpose of Government, says Machiavelli, is to keep itself in power and to extend its power. This is the first duty of a Prince, and he is justified in taking all steps that may be necessary to "wheedle or destroy" those who oppose him.) His illustrations—for example, Cæsar Borgia's treatment of Remiro d'Orco—have a touch of the grotesque which leads some commentators to suspect a hidden irony; but there is no trace of this in his general exposition of the art and craft of Government. (That justifies any exercise of fraud, force, ruthlessness and cruelty required to keep a ruler in power. The Prince may break his promises and tear up his treaties, if he gains by so doing. Success and failure are the sole measures of right and wrong. That which succeeds is right; that which fails is wrong.)

Macaulay, in his famous essay, wavers between saying that Machiavelli expressed the opinions of his time, and that he "enjoyed a vindictive pleasure in outraging the opinions of a society which he despised." His doctrine no doubt reflected the real opinions of many Italians of the Renaissance, but there is abundant evidence that it outraged the opinion of men in general both in his own age and for several centuries to come. His name became a by-word for cunning and trickery, his opinions are generally repudiated even by writers who, in other respects, are favourable to absolutism. There is, of course, no question that the methods which he describes have been practised by sovereigns and Governments in the centuries since he wrote, but they have generally been condemned

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even by those who practised them, and it is only in quite recent times that they have been applauded and approved and elevated into a philosophy of government.

### VII

The great culprit in this respect is the German philosopher Hegel, who threw an aura of mysticism over what the world till then had agreed to call devil's doctrine. In his "Philosophy of History" may be found not merely in germ, but explicitly stated, a large part of the modern Nazi doctrine. The State is here presented as a divine institution, the creation of the spirit which works through history, absorbing its members into itself, requiring their unqualified service and submission, and justifying all conduct required for its power and glory. Being "the divine idea as it exists on earth," it is a fit subject of devotion, and nothing done for its advancement can be judged by the standard of home-spun morality. There is a dual morality—that of the State in its dealings with its subjects and other states; that of individuals in their relations with one another. When the two conflict, the former has the supreme claim.

Hegel goes all lengths in enforcing this conclusion. "World historical men—the makers of states—must not be judged by ordinary standards of right and wrong." "Moral claims that are irrelevant must not be brought into collision with world-historical deeds and their accomplishment. The litany of private virtues—modesty, humility, philanthropy and forbearance—must not be raised against them." Hegel hails Machiavelli's "Prince" as "the great and true conception of a real political genius with the highest and noblest intentions"—a tribute which,

I think, would greatly have astonished Machiavelli himself.<sup>1</sup>

There is something more here than the admission which most historians have made, that all manner of agents have entered into the historical process, and that the simplified judgments which label some good and others bad is very far from covering the ground. What Hegel definitely asserts is that the moral judgment of right and wrong—as applied to the normal human situation—is without validity in the sphere of public action. Wickedness in high places, or what would be so judged by the normal standard, is not wickedness at all if practised for the advancement of the state. World historical men may quite literally say “evil be thou my good,” and be justified by some supposed higher morality beyond good and evil, as men and women understand these words in their dealings with one another.

This has been the great calamity of the modern world. Wickedness in high places, as all mankind had hitherto acknowledged it to be, has received a philosophic and even—if the words I have quoted have any meaning—a religious justification. Let the reader turn back to Machiavelli’s “Prince,” read it for what it is, apart from all sophisticated modern glosses, and then consider what follows when it is hailed as “a conception of the highest and noblest intentions.” This certificate is given to a conception of the art of Government which justifies any fraud, violence, cruelty, trickery and treachery that a ruler may think necessary to keep himself in power or extend his power. The private morality is not only

<sup>1</sup> The English apologists of Hegel appear to have overlooked these very explicit passages ; see “Hegel and Prussianism,” by Professor T. M. Knox, *Philosophy*, January, 1940. Whether Hegel would have approved Nazism or any particular modern state is of little consequence compared with the fact that he gave his sanction to the idea of a state morality beyond the good and evil of the ordinary morality.

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discarded, but inverted. The lower part of human nature, as even the pagan philosophers had regarded it, now becomes the higher and promptings to humane or kindly action are condemned as ignoble when they conflict with the interests of the state.

### VIII

The new doctrine fell on well-prepared soil. Frederick the Great and Prussians of his school had always believed that this was the truth about human affairs, though none of them had dared to say so out loud. With Hegel and his successors in the early nineteenth century dominating the schools of philosophy, Prussianism could raise its head and claim its status as the authentic interpretation of the world spirit. With this backing a Minister like Bismarck could go his way undeterred by moral scruples, and even combine his practice as a statesman with evangelical piety in his private life. At the same time, Treitschke, Bernhardi and a host of minor prophets were embroidering the doctrine and preaching it to thousands of young men as the gospel of the German State—the virile, heroic German State, charged with a mission to spread its Kultur over the whole world. Nietzsche, who gave it a universal application, was never in favour with these teachers. The State in their view was the German State, and what would happen if other States took to preaching the methods which they commended to Germans was a question to which they appear to have given little, if any, attention.

The last war gave the new doctrine a temporary check. But the moral drawn by the fighting spirits was not that it was wrong, but that the Second Reich had been clumsy and half-hearted in applying it. Ludendorff discovered that Christian inhibitions were fatal to it, and proclaimed

boldly that Christianity must go, and the worship of Thor and Wotan be restored. Hitler coming from the South gave a romantic setting to the bleaker Prussian doctrine, and presented it as the gospel of salvation and prosperity to the whole German people then smarting under defeat and economic misery. No more weakness, no democratic pottering, no liberal nonsense, but a double dose of ruthlessness, discipline and the subordination of all else to preparation for war—this was what the German people was said to require. Much of this was in the old style, but Hitler invested it with a racial mysticism which was his own special contribution. The Germans, he said, were the one noble and pure race ; to keep their race pure was a sacred trust in the discharge of which a merciless persecution of Jews alleged to be its contaminators was not only justifiable but a duty.

Evidently this doctrine could not be reconciled with Christianity as ordinarily understood. Hitler, therefore, while stopping short of Ludendorff's solution, decreed that there should be a new German Christianity in conformity with his doctrine. If he was to be told that this doctrine was un-Christian, then so much the worse for Christianity. Christianity must be made what he wished it to be ; there must be a new "German Christian Church." Religion was useful to the leader but it must be his kind of religion. The modern anti-Christian movement is thus seen coming to its climax in the creation of the "German Christian Church." The Christian Church had suffered many vicissitudes in its relations with the State. It had been racked by controversies upon whether its doctrines conformed to the teaching of its founder and how this teaching should be interpreted. But never before had either monarch or statesman demanded that this doctrine should be changed to correspond with *his* definitions of right and wrong, to authorize and sanctify *his* ideas of state policy, to exclude

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any teaching of the founder which conflicted with *his* views. Hegel's idea that the Prince of Machiavelli was "a conception of the highest and noblest intentions" was thus carried to its logical conclusion and what mankind in general had agreed to call wickedness was consecrated to the service of the State. By this act Hitler made absolute the decree of divorce between the public and the private virtues which Hegel had pronounced.

It is strange on looking back that the English Liberals who accepted Hegelianism as the last word of philosophic truth should have overlooked this seed of mischief in their master's teaching. Its logical development into Hitlerism would certainly have horrified Thomas Hill Green and other Oxford Hegelians who found a middle course between state-idolatry and the administrative nihilism of extreme individualists in the social-service Liberalism of subsequent years. It seems to me doubtful whether any of them read Hegel's "Philosophy of History" or, if they did, realized its significance in its political context. But Hegel, like Rousseau and Marx, provided an explosive which required a certain temperature to bring it to its flash point. Until that point was reached it lay dormant and could be handled without risk and treated as a philosophical curiosity by teachers and students in class-rooms.

## IX

We have now swung from pole to pole, from the doctrine which permits no compromise with the moral law to the doctrine which proclaims wickedness—as a normal being understands the words—to be the necessary and laudable practice of efficient Governments.

There could be no greater set-back to civilization than that the second of these doctrines should prevail, but there

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is no short cut to its defeat. That in the end will be the work of education, whether the grim education of war or the milder process of convincing the world that no tolerable life is possible while it remains undefeated. While this process goes forward, the idealist must meet the realist on his own ground, the terrible battle-ground of the modern world. " Trust in God and keep your powder dry " seems to sum it all up. The dry powder will not save us if we forget God, nor God save us if we are without the human means of saving ourselves. To bring the conduct of States into conformity with the moral law is the capital object of civilization, which as yet is in its infancy. We cannot act as if it had been achieved, but to deny that it can and ought to be achieved is, in public affairs, the sin against the Holy Ghost.

## CHAPTER II

### HAS A NATION A CONSCIENCE?

#### I

MY memory sometimes dwells on the occasions when with four or five others I sat at the dining-room table in the Master's Lodge at Balliol and had to read out loud an essay on some philosophical conundrum he had set us. This happened once a week during our last year, and I think of it still with a slight shudder. We came in after dinner, and I can see the white cloth, the decanters of sherry and the little dishes of crystallized cherries which were provided for our refreshment. "Sherry and cherry" was our word for it, and we generally had one small glass of sherry each and two cherries. To take more than two was a sign either of great nervousness or exceptional courage. Under great affliction one stretched out one's hand in an automatic way for a third cherry, but as a rule only a very forward youth ventured on more than two.

I can recall little in detail of these occasions except the rebukes which I drew from the Master for my efforts to please him. His eye would rest on me for a long minute's silence after I had read my essay, and then it would move very slowly to my neighbour with a "next essay, please." Jowett was no doubt a benevolent man whose entirely disinterested labours on their behalf deserve the gratitude of his pupils, but these, unhappily, are the little things that dwell in memory when much else is forgotten. To this

day I remember that “next essay, please” was my reward for my endeavour to answer one of the conundrums he set us—has a nation a conscience?

Probably the same fate would befall me if I were to return again to that scene, and attempted to answer this question after fifty-five years in which to watch the behaviour of nations has been one of my chief occupations in life. Indeed, the question seems more complicated and the answer to it even more unsettled now than at the beginning of this period. Every good Victorian believed that a nation had or ought to have a conscience—something corresponding to Rousseau’s “general will”—and did not think so the less because different parties came to diametrically opposite conclusions as to its promptings and warnings. Gladstone would passionately have affirmed and Disraeli certainly not have denied that the nation was bound by the moral law. Except a few malignant little-Englanders who took a positive pleasure in finding their countrymen in the wrong, all Englishmen believed that their statesmen were guided by high moral principles. If a few exceptions were admitted these generally belonged to the past, and the disapproval of them expressed by historians was proof the more of the existence of a conscience which did not shrink from condemnation when it found itself in the wrong and when, as its neighbours remarked, the fruits of its wrong-doing had been safely reaped and garnered.

Foreigners sneered at this self-approval and called it hypocrisy. They said that if the Englishman had been free to profess a superior morality, it was only because his insular position had enabled him to indulge in that luxury. He could lay down the law to his neighbours, point out the right path to them and avoid all inconvenient consequences by retiring behind his moat. The bland avowal of his historians that he watched the struggles of his neighbours and only intervened when one of them

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seemed to be getting too strong for his security or convenience, seemed to them quite as cynical as anything that could be imputed to their statesmen. It needs no very sharp ears to detect a murmur of satisfaction even among his friends in Europe at the thought that air-power has deprived John Bull of his unique position as moral arbiter of Europe.

As an Englishman I continue to think that he can make a pretty good case for his claim not to have abused this position. If he began his career as an aggressive Imperialist he has now for some generations been putting off his imperialism and working towards his idea of a free commonwealth. Whether in practice or in theory his system stands in vivid contrast with the German. If he irritated his neighbours by talking about his "command of the sea" he shared with them most of the advantages that he obtained for himself and never shook his trident in their faces except when they threatened to encroach on his territory. He did the United States the considerable service of placing his fleet behind the Monroe doctrine during their period of growth and development; he invited the traders of all nations to trade with his Empire on the same terms as he traded himself; his innate respect for the principle of self-government saved him from trying to dictate to any of them how they should be governed. If he had a preference for the free countries, he was ready for bargains and ententes with them all, Tsars, Shahs, democrats and bureaucrats. Live-and-let-live was his favourite maxim. None of his smaller neighbours could say that they were the worse for his existence.

The argument took a rather different turn after the last war. The English people were uneasy about the Treaty of Versailles and true to their tradition not to hit a fellow when he is down, tried to attenuate what they thought to be harsh and unjust in it. They wished everybody to disarm,

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whereupon the French said this was all very well for the English, whose territory had never been devastated and who had never understood the Germans, but they had no right to give themselves the moral luxury of being kind to Germans at the expense of France and French security. The difficulty of reconciling these two points of view was one of the principal causes of the failure of the League of Nations.

### II

It is perhaps by considering concrete cases that we shall best see our way to some conclusions in this matter. I will, therefore, take certain questions which have most stirred the British conscience, if it may be so called, in my lifetime.

I have a vivid memory of Mr. Gladstone's Midlothian campaigns which filled the years between my sixteenth and eighteenth birthdays. I can still hear those thunders, as from Sinai, which went rolling round the heavens at that time. Though brought up in a Conservative household I fell under this influence and became a warm partisan of the Gladstonian anti-Turkish policy. But so far, though he constantly appealed to the Ten Commandments, Mr. Gladstone had remained on negative ground. He had demanded that we should not go to war with Russia to save the "unspeakable Turk"; he had not demanded that we should go to war with Turkey or her protectors for the benefit of her oppressed subjects. On this negative ground the question was not one of making sacrifices for an ideal cause; it was only one of refraining from action on what Mr. Gladstone considered to be the wrong side.

Fifteen years later, when the Turkish massacres continued and Armenians were being slaughtered by the million, there was a change over from the negative to the positive. A strong demand arose that the British Government should intervene at the risk or cost of war to save the

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Armenians, and Mr. Gladstone in one of the last speeches he ever made in public seemed to give his countenance to it. At that Lord Rosebery, who was leader of the Liberal party, then in Opposition, resigned his office on the double ground that he was unwilling either to support this demand or to find himself in conflict with Mr. Gladstone. He was strongly rebuked by the stalwarts of the Liberal party for his lack of faith and courage, but he held firmly to the general principle that a leader of Opposition should not advocate a policy which he would be unable to pursue if he returned to power, and he was convinced that no British Government would, when it came to the point, risk being plunged into a European war for the sake of the Armenians. Having said in a public speech that, much as he sympathized with those unhappy people, he did not think that the British Empire could reasonably be asked to stake its all in their cause, he received a letter from an ardent Liberal lady, who said that she could not imagine a better cause in which the British Empire could perish. The lady was not appeased when he replied that he did not wish the British Empire to perish.

Though he was almost a Gladstonian in his dislike of the Turk, Lord Salisbury was of the same opinion as Lord Rosebery when it came to taking action. In a speech to his Nonconformist supporters he put a question :

“ Supposing the Sultan will not give these reforms, what is to follow ? The first answer I should give is, that above all treaties and above all combinations of external Powers, the nature of things, if you please, or the Providence of God, if you are pleased to put it so, has determined that persistent and constant misgovernment must lead the Government which follows to its doom ; and while I readily admit that it is quite possible for the Sultan of Turkey, if he will, to govern all his subjects with justice and in peace, he is not exempt more than any potentate from the law that injustice will bring the highest of earth to ruin.”

Consigning "Abdul the Damned" to the judgment of Divine Providence seemed, as was said at the time, a rather too easy way out for an earthly statesman, but the Liberal Opposition, being painfully aware that if they had been in his place they would have acted much as he did, forebore to press him.

Humanitarianism at this moment was at a rather lower ebb than usual in Europe. The other Powers found it impossible to believe that Great Britain could be sincere in her profession of concern for the slaughtered Christians. Russians, Austrians and Germans were agreed that she was setting a trap for her neighbours and rivals. Let us be quite sure, they said in unison, that we do not fall into it. In an immortal dispatch which finds a place among the German documents,<sup>1</sup> the Russian Ambassador to the Porte described the scene behind the scenes as the Ambassadors sat together in Constantinople in December, 1895 :

"Sir Philip Currie (British Ambassador) continues to urge that the Sultan must be publicly unmasked, and the Powers be thus enabled to prevent him from causing further mischief.

"The miscreant, who has already slaughtered nearly one hundred thousand people and is not yet sated, must be rendered innocuous for reasons of general humanity.

"M. de Nelidoff (Russian Ambassador), however, rejects all suggestions aimed at a direct attack on the Sultan or the use of forcible constraint in his Government administration.

"Both colleagues tried privately to win me over to their side.

"Nelidoff admitted that his positive instructions were to support the Sultan, and in all cases to refuse participation in unfriendly steps taken against him jointly by his colleagues.

"Sir Philip Currie pointed to the growing dissatisfaction in public opinion in England, the resulting probability that his Government will soon be forced to act against the Sultan, the author of such endless misery. Even the other Powers could not, in order to please Russia, allow the whole of Turkey to fall into complete anarchy through the guilt of Abdul Hamid.

<sup>1</sup> *Grosse Politik*, X, No. 2479, page 127.

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"According to instructions, I carefully kept up my reserve with both Ambassadors, and merely said how desirable it appeared to me to remain united, if only to be able to report calmly and objectively to our Governments and avoid the risk of their forming divergent judgments on the situation here.

"From the French Ambassador's attitude, it appears that his Government—though it follows Russia in general—is not so kindly disposed towards the Sultan and his deeds as is the case in St. Petersburg, and would scarcely take Abdul Hamid's side if England one day became impatient and felt moved to take direct action.

"That subtle observer, the Sultan, has long ago realized the change in the policy of the Powers who used to be firmly united against him, and is evidently beginning to count on Russia's support if he gets into a scrape.

"It is clear that this will not help much to restore order in Asia Minor; but perhaps it is to the political interest of Russia also to keep conditions there in a more and more rotten state."—(December 16th, 1895.)

The Ambassadors thus sat watching one another while the "endless misery" went on, and that "subtle observer," the Sultan, snapped his fingers at them all. Thus were "divergent judgments" which might have led to a conflict in action avoided. In the meantime the Kaiser, who had just proclaimed himself the Champion of the Cross in the Far East, threw his shield over the Crescent in the Near East and imperturbably pursued the policy of friendship with the Turk on which he had now set his heart. It was observed in after years that Salisbury had not been quite so wrong when he consigned them all to the judgment of Providence. The three great Empires—Russian, Austrian and German—had set Abdul Hamid safely on his throne for another twelve years and decreed that his Empire in Europe should linger unreformed until it involved them all in its downfall.

The position taken by the diplomatists in these years was not a denial of Turkish misconduct but an assertion

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that the conflict which would follow if they tried to cure it would be far worse than the massacre of Armenians. Bismarck had said at an earlier stage that if people had to be killed, it was far better that Bulgarians and Turks should kill one another than that Germans and Austrians should be killed by Russians or Turks. A large part of the conflict between the public and the private morality is summarized in that sentence.

## CHAPTER III

### SOME TEST CASES

#### I

THE next acute cases of conscience for the British people were the Jameson Raid and the South African War.

There was no code whatever by which Jameson's incursion into the Transvaal could be defended. According to the most cynical, it could only have been justified by results, and it was a lamentable and mortifying failure. Jameson and his troopers had entirely miscalculated the opposition to them; his friends in the Transvaal had not played the part he had assigned to them; he was in the position of a burglar who had walked into the hands of the police.

Cecil Rhodes protested that the raid had taken him by surprise and "upset his apple-cart." But, except on the one point of the day and hour when Jameson should start, he was undoubtedly at the back of the whole business and he was deeply aggrieved when a large section of the public expressed their indignation and offered their sympathy to the Boers. Still more, when the British Government, to which President Kruger had handed Jameson and his friends, proceeded to put them on trial. He now complained bitterly of the "unctuous rectitude" of the British people which had failed to perceive the patriotic intentions of the raiders and was treating them as common criminals, instead of as heroes who had risked their lives in the interests

of the Empire. So incensed was he at this stupidity and so concerned for his friends who were now in a serious position, that he vowed that if they went down, other and more important people should go down too. By hints and inuendoes he let it be supposed that he had information which would show that no less a person than the Colonial Secretary was privy to the raid, and that if his friends suffered he would not scruple to use this information.

The accepted code had always been that if secret agents employed by a Government failed in an enterprise which it could not conveniently avow, they should accept any consequences rather than implicate their employers. If, therefore, the facts had been as Rhodes alleged, it might have been supposed that, in virtue of his zeal for the Empire, Rhodes would have taken the blame upon himself and endeavoured in all possible ways to prevent the Government from becoming involved. On the contrary, he produced the impression that he was prepared to go all lengths to defend himself and his friends, if any serious steps were taken against him.

At this point many eminent people lost their heads. Instead of telling Rhodes to do his worst, they parleyed with him, and as time went on, got more and more into his toils. It was at best a very awkward business. It was the duty of the Colonial Secretary to keep himself informed of what was going forward in the Transvaal, and a very slight indiscretion on his part or that of his officials might have made it appear that he had crossed the line between keeping himself informed and conniving at the operations of the raiders. Previous Colonial Secretaries, including the Liberal Lord Kimberley, had found it a delicate matter to observe the correct neutrality between the Transvaal Government and its disaffected foreign subjects, and an impetuous man new to the office, like Joseph Chamberlain, might have been less cautious.

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But if so, it was extremely undesirable that this should become public knowledge. Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, had quite honestly assured the German Ambassador on the day after the raid that the British Government had been completely taken by surprise by Jameson's action and knew nothing whatever about it, before it took place. All the other Governments were putting the question, and it had been similarly answered. The German Kaiser, as the subsequently published documents show, was trying his hardest to rally his European neighbours to joint action against Great Britain. Meanwhile he had rendered us great but unintended service through his telegram to President Kruger, which had diverted British opinion from mortification at the Jameson fiasco into wrath against Germany. Nothing could have been more untimely and even more dangerous to the national interests than the disclosure which Rhodes threatened to make.

There was unanimity among those who knew the circumstances that this must be prevented at all costs. Let Rhodes keep his Privy Councillorship, and even get the testimonial to character that he demanded, let the Chartered Company keep its Charter, and Jameson and his troopers get every possible indulgence rather than that Rhodes should carry out his threats. But the thing had gone too far for any ordinary hushing-up. The Opposition in the House of Commons was demanding inquiry ; the formidable Mr. Stead was on the warpath ; the envious foreigner was watching to see how the English would behave.

The Government temporised, but tided over the immediate difficulty by appointing a Select Committee of the House of Commons, which was not to start its proceedings till the following year. These, when they came, took the extraordinary form of a hushing-up in public. The on-lookers became aware that a stubborn but exceedingly obscure duel was going on between Chamberlain and

Rhodes, and that this governed all the proceedings. Witnesses were whisked out of the box just as their evidence seemed to be becoming important ; the public sittings were suddenly suspended when the scent seemed to be getting warm ; and when the curtain was raised again, an entirely different branch of the inquiry was found to have been taken up. All the witnesses seemed willing to wound and yet afraid to strike ; and the Committee itself habitually to accept the most far-fetched explanation of incidents of which the obvious interpretation was under its nose. In the end the Committee adopted a literal construction of its terms of reference, and limited itself to finding that Chamberlain was not privy to Jameson's proceedings, which nobody supposed he was. The larger question, whether he was aware of the Johannesburg conspiracy and had helped or connived at the preparations for the raid, was left unanswered, but Sir William Harcourt's son has put on record that his father, who was a member of this Committee, "always believed, though this could not be subject to proof, that Chamberlain was aware of and by implication a participant in the preparations for a rising at Johannesburg." To the end Rhodes exacted his terms, and to Harcourt's dismay Chamberlain wiped out any censure there was in the Report of the Committee by declaring that he had done "nothing inconsistent with honour."

Forty years later it may seem of little importance whether Chamberlain did or did not cross the line between watchful neutrality and connivance at the conspiracy and raid. But at the time it seemed to be teaming with portentous consequences, and all the members of the Committee, including Liberals and Radicals, were agreed that, whatever the facts, the Government must not be pilloried in the manner which Rhodes seemed to threaten. Were they wrong ? Should the truth have been exposed, though the heavens fell ?

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The question was debated for years afterwards. Stern moralists thundered in denunciation, and when two years later the South African War broke out, traced its beginning to the failure to do justice in this inquiry and the consequent sowing of mistrust among the Dutch. Even practical men like Rosebery and Asquith were of opinion that this was at least one of the causes of the war. To the end of his life Asquith regretted that he had not had the presence of mind to get up in his place and denounce the unexpected whitewashing of Rhodes.

Even then I think it would have been too late. The impression created that the Government was hiding something which would not bear exposure had been created and could not have been removed by anything that happened in debate. The judgment of the great majority was in two parts, (1) that Ministers and leaders of parties were justified in agreeing together to prevent any exposure which would have been damaging not merely to the Government, but to the public interest as a whole, and (2) that on this assumption the affair had been deplorably mishandled. That is to say, the Government ought either to have refused all inquiry from the beginning, or to have conducted it behind closed doors. On any assumption, a public inquiry so conducted as to 'create the impression that the truth was being burked was a calamity.

About this there could be no doubt, but it left the moral judgment in suspense. Many years later one of the witnesses at the inquiry told me the facts as he knew them in contrast with the version he had given of them in the witness stand, and asked me if I thought he was justified. He was a very honest man and the occasion had been much on his conscience. I comforted him by saying yes, and in reflecting on it, I think it was the right answer. Undoubtedly he had taken liberties with truth, and, had it been a private transaction in which he stood to gain, there

could have been no excuse for him. But in the case as it had been put to him, and as he honestly saw it, the evil of telling the truth would have done damage to the public interest out of all proportion to the evils of concealing it. Ultimately I know of no test in such a matter except the pragmatic one of the lesser evil. As a commentator on public affairs, I dare not lay my hand on my heart and say I have never accepted it or acted on it in my own writings. On the contrary, if I had known all the circumstances at the time, my sympathies would have been entirely with Chamberlain, who had every right to look to Rhodes to protect him from the consequences of an indiscretion which, if committed at all, had been committed on Rhodes's prompting. The case is a rare one, and the test is a perilous one, but for my part I should feel it can't to say that there were no circumstances in public affairs in which I thought it permissible to economize truth.

## II

I saw Rhodes when he came to London after the Raid, and the impression he made on me was not an agreeable one. He seemed to be entirely concerned for himself and his friends and the "upsetting of his apple-cart." He, the great Imperialist, apparently cared nothing at all about the trouble he had made for the Imperial Government and the possible results in Europe, if he carried out his threats. None of that was his business; what he had to do was to protect his friends, see that the Chartered Company did not lose its Charter—in short, prevent any of the things being done which might have convinced the Boer or the European onlooker that the British Government was determined to do justice. I remember still the impatience with which he brushed aside any suggestion that the Ten Commandments had the slightest relevance to these affairs.

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Only smugs, hypocrites and little-Englanders talked in that way. All this was "unctuous rectitude." Rhodes undoubtedly had his generous and disinterested side (witness the famous will in which he disposed of his enormous fortune), but as Stead, who largely inspired him on this side, used to say, he lived in the "moral meridian" of South Africa, which latterly had meant Johannesburg. His qualities were a compound of energy, sagacity, vision, with an abounding egoism and a very mean opinion of human nature. If he did not actually say, as was commonly reported, that every man had his price, he did believe that most opposition could be bought off. At one time he even dallied with the idea of devoting part of his fortune to a secretly paid propaganda in British imperial interests. He was the type from which Hitlers and Mussolinis are made, and it never occurred to him that he could break his shins on the British Non-conformist conscience.

When the South African war came many uneasy minds found salvation in President Kruger's ultimatum. They had followed the course of events since 1895 with deep misgivings, but who could expect the great British Empire to swallow this affront from a few thousand Dutch farmers? A stalwart body of Radicals held out on the ground that the Boers had been goaded into this folly by Milner and Chamberlain, but the great majority held that war was now inevitable, and, like Rosebery, "dated their judgment from the ultimatum as Moslems from the Hegira." In the third year of the war Campbell-Bannerman proved his quality by his protest against the military method of farm-burnings and concentration camp—a method which would be judged comparatively merciful by later standards—and by declining to retract in the storm which followed, established his reputation as an honest man of great courage. But the real question of conscience came not on this question, but at the point when it had

to be decided whether the Boer Republics should be annexed.

When the war started, all parties had disclaimed the intention to annex. Lord Salisbury had said, "we want no territory, we want no gold-fields"; the Liberal supporters of the war had been even more emphatic in the same sense, and what the pro-Boers thought need not be stated. I myself was one of the few who thought from the beginning that, if there was a war, it must, and indeed ought to, end in the annexation of these states. The only permanent peace possible in South Africa depended on the co-operation of Dutch and British, and the only hope of that lay in the establishment of a supreme authority which, as things were, could only be British. To accept that as the foundation of a Liberal policy seemed to me wise in the interests of both races and of the Empire.

But when I broached this idea to a few intimates, I found that they were shocked at what they supposed to be its cynicism. Conceivably, they said, annexation might be inevitable at the end of the war, but to avow it at this stage after our disclaimer of interested motives would expose us to universal condemnation. Liberal Imperialists were, I remember, specially clear that it would place them in a false position; the utmost they could do would be to consent under protest if the Government announced it.

It seemed to me, on the contrary, so obvious that annexation must result when the war was won that honesty as well as policy was on the side of saying so. True, I was thinking a little of the Liberal Party, which on the line of never consenting, was likely to drift into a position of unavailing protest against the inevitable—a position which might doom it to opposition for years to come. But still more, if there was to be an effective Liberal policy for South Africa after the war, it must be based on a frank acceptance of the accomplished fact and it was far better that Liberals

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should begin thinking about that than that they should dig themselves deeper and deeper into a merely negative attitude. I began cautiously developing these ideas in the *Westminster Gazette*, and then, as I often did on a Sunday afternoon, went to talk things over with Campbell-Bannerman, who at this time was thought to be the staunchest of pro-Boers. Somewhat to my surprise and greatly to my relief, I found that he was entirely of the same opinion. But he had a grand tussle before he brought other members of the party into line with him. Morley declared at first that he would never consent. Asquith was a "late and reluctant convert." The pro-Boers denounced the very idea as iniquitous, and Stead reproached me bitterly for having betrayed my principles and tempted the Liberal Party to sell its soul. The annexation was, in fact, the necessary foundation for the Liberal policy of self-government which saved the situation in the subsequent years.

Here we have one of the crucial cases of the difference between the private and the public morality. According to the private code, the Jameson Raid, the hushing-up and the failure to do justice which followed, the sharp diplomacy ending in the war which turned the situation against the Boers who were originally the aggrieved parties, were all abominations. But all through this time it was becoming evident that there could be no lasting peace or settling down in Africa while British and Dutch claims to sovereignty continued to clash, and that on its merits the wise settlement must be a merging of the two sovereignties in one Federal Government, which, for the moment at all events, could only be founded on a decision in favour of Great Britain. By the short-term private morality test British behaviour was abominable; by the long-term historical reckoning, it has turned out to be wise, if not just.

The case, it may be said, is *sui generis*. and the moralist

may treat it as wickedness redeemed by subsequent repentance and good conduct. But that will not quite do, for the good conduct was only rendered possible by the peace which the wickedness had ensured. True repentance, according to the private morality, must have been accompanied by atonement, which would have required the restoration of the Transvaal and Free State to the Boers. Mr. Gladstone did exactly that when he restored the Transvaal to its "rightful owners" in 1880, but this was the beginning of new and worse trouble. In after years the Boers themselves, with the exception of a few die-hards, came to recognize the great advantages of a united South Africa, and would only with the greatest reluctance have accepted a return to the old divisions even if they had been offered to them. The Dutch saying "all will come right" repeated so often in the war, seems thus to have been verified in their own experience.

## III

Are we, then, shut in to the conclusion that in public affairs the end justifies the means? Dante, who in his "De Monarchia" had set out to prove that the Roman Empire was ordained by God, found himself in a mass of casuistry in his attempt to answer this question. Cicero had posed the same question in his "De Republica," and been equally perplexed about the answer to it. It was only too evident that, if Rome had acted on the principles that Cicero had defined as justice or that Dante regarded as Christian, she would never have won her Empire and might easily have remained the poverty-stricken village that she was at the beginning. Cicero falls back on the plea that Rome could not have become great, or at least have remained great, unless to her other qualities she had

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added good counsel, discipline and the practice of justice. These saved her from the revolution and disruption which would otherwise have destroyed her Empire. This is a good practical comment on Roman history, but it leaves the moral question unanswered. Was it in the moral sense " wrong " for Rome to have committed " aggression " on her weaker neighbours or—for that matter—for British and Americans to have evicted Redskins from territory which they regarded as their own, for the British to have conquered India and subdued the tribes of Africa ? How in the final account does it look, what would be the judgment of the all-just and the all-knowing ?

Dante was driven step by step to the conclusion that having intended the end God must have intended the means. But he is often in trouble with this argument, and when it seems to make God the actual author of evil, he finds a way of escape by speaking of " nature " as the operating factor, " nature which must be perfect since it is the work of the divine intelligence." Dante would in any case, I think, have drawn a sharp distinction between intending and sanctioning or sanctifying the means. He would have said that though it might be part of the divine counsel to let the good and the evil, the wheat and the tares, grow together to the harvest, it was impious to use words which implied that God was the actual author of evil.

The Greeks used the word *ἀνάγκη*—which in this connection may be translated as " brute fact "—when thinking of the past. Having happened, things must be regarded as inevitable and necessary, but whether they ought to have happened or might have been prevented is not brought into the question. This leaves the moral judgment in suspense. The historian is now free either (i) to take a determinist attitude and refrain from judgment on the ground that since things have happened so,

they must have happened so and there is no more to be said about them. Or, (2) he may sit in the judgment seat and distribute praise and blame as if the actors on the scene were amenable to the morality of the private life.

This actually is the habit of most historians, and it will and ought to persist, in spite of the reaction against it among the modern "objective" and "scientific" historians. It is salutary and right that the moral standards should be upheld against the cynicism which denies all standards. Yet no one can read far into history or written on this plan without coming to the conclusion that the passing of historical judgments is a very tricky business. Governments which are trustees for their subjects cannot act like individuals who are free to do what conscience is said to dictate. There is evidently a difference in quality as well as in quantity between the behaviour of men individually and men in the mass. It is only the supreme harvester who can discriminate between the wheat and the tares. And then as an undertone to all history runs the warning, "the wrath of man maketh not the righteousness of good." Man's righteous indignation is not enough nor always just.

## IV

To probe farther into the nature of things would take us into the deep waters of religion and philosophy. Here the practical politician must halt. But certain things remain to be said on this practical ground. There may be a certain casuistry about the way of escape from a particular tangled situation, but the deliberate adoption of the idea that the end justifies the means is devil's doctrine for statesmen and politicians. The justification of means by ends may *in the end* be recorded in history or written in the book with the seven seals, but no man can be absolved in

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his own day for doing what he knows to be wickedness in the supposed interests of his state, or the hope of a final justification which he cannot foresee. The cases in which acknowledged wickedness seems to have been justified by results are few and far between ; in the vast majority retribution has followed in the end and structures built on force and fraud have fallen in ruin. Those who think themselves beyond good and evil and right and wrong have generally had but a short run and their memory is execrated.

To bring the public morality into conformity with the private is, let it be said again, the grand object of civilization. When the behaviour of nations to one another is as decent and neighbourly as that of neighbours to one another in an average city or village, we may begin to think of ourselves as civilized. Why is this seemingly rational and desirable object so long delayed ? Why is there such elaborate apparatus of sophistry and hypocrisy to give a veneer of good appearance to operations which are plainly sinister and aggressive ?

The short answer is war. So long as the nations contemplate war as the ultimate means of settling their differences, so long will the morality and mentality of war govern their dealings with one another in peace. Just as fraud and force are held to be legitimate in war, so will fraud and the threat of force be regarded as legitimate weapons of diplomacy in the manœuvring for position in war which is the main object of most Governments in peace. In this business honesty and candour as practised in the private life cease to be even virtuous. You must have spies to inform you of the preparations and intentions of your opponents who also will have spies seeking the same information about you. You will threaten or conciliate as suits your purpose, and if your intention is to deceive that also is held to be legitimate. The unique series of

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records covering the forty-four years between the Franco-Prussian War and the Great War show all the great Governments in different degrees practising these methods and not a few of the greatest practitioners taking special pride in their skill in deceiving and over-reaching.

The British records of this period stand out from the rest in their candour and truthfulness. No British statesman can be convicted of the lie direct. But Great Britain gets no credit for this from her foreign critics. She, the great sated Power, they said, could afford to be honest. She would have behaved exactly as they did, if she had been in their position. It was pure hypocrisy for her to pretend otherwise.

Nevertheless, this "hypocrisy" meant something rather important. It meant that the British people were uncomfortable at the discrepancy between the State morality and what they thought to be honest and just. In this respect, as their neighbours often pointed out, they lacked the "continental mind" which measured things "objectively" and took for granted that they would be governed not by the moral code, but by the play of forces. Americans in the eyes of most Europeans, shared this infirmity, and in recent years, it has been difficult to say which British or American "idealism" has caused more exasperation to the power-politicians of Europe. The contrast, as they see it, is not between a superior and an inferior morality but between the hypocrisy which obscures and the clear-sighted realism which sees the facts as they are and acts accordingly. The mixture of the two moralities was in Bismarck's eyes the worst sin of which a statesman could be capable. He could get on with Disraeli who accepted his principles and was careful in handling explosives ; the really dangerous man was Gladstone who in the name of the Ten Commandments brought naked lights into the powder magazine.

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In this kind of world there can be no solitary virtue. The pacifist may preach that the world would be safer without armaments and be willing to suffer martyrdom for his doctrine of non-violence. But Governments which are the trustees of their countries dare not take the risk of the experiment. It may be proved by demonstration that there is no profit in victory, but defeat remains an immeasurable calamity against which the most Christian of nations must seek to secure itself. Nor, if two-thirds of the world plays the international game by the rules of power-politics can the remaining third play it by the rules of the Christian gospel. Here, too, there is a Gresham's law by which the bad currency drives out the good. The experience of the League of Nations suggests that the attempt to keep order with an inadequate force leads only by another route to violence and war. One half of the world cannot expect to moralize the other half without encountering resistance.

Is there then no hope? Are the Nietzsches and the Bernhardis and the Hitlers and Mussolinis right when they declare the law of the jungle to be the necessary condition of humankind? Can a nation have no conscience except a blind instinct to destroy its neighbours on pain of being destroyed by them?

\* \* \* \* \*

I had stopped at this point on August 22nd, 1939. A week later the question had taken on a sudden, new and terrible reality. I have considered since whether this chapter should go into the same limbo as much else written before September 1st, 1939, and come to the conclusion that it may stand and even serve a purpose. For without premeditation it seems to sum up and bring to a focus the various elements which have fused in the unique rally of the British people in the war—the element of conscience

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which feels deeply that wrong must be resisted, the call of chivalry to help the little peoples who have been its victims, the practical sense which tells us that life would be intolerable if Hitlerism were allowed to prevail. It is not propaganda or any political theory which has brought us to this point, but hard experience spreading by degrees into all the crannies of our life—politics, business, birth and education, leisure and pleasure. We have learnt that respect for liberty and individual rights is not abstract theory, but the actual condition of an orderly existence in which we can plan for the future, whether for the nation or our homes, and live the life of peace without fear. If we look for the secret of the hard, quiet resolution with which the British people have faced up to the emergency, it will be found in the unique combination of their instinctive idealism with practical experience which Hitlerism has wrought in them.

## CHAPTER IV

### ISMS AND OLOGIES

#### I

I HAVE spent some hours recently on an interesting and spirited book by one of my juniors ("Government and the Governed," by R. H. S. Crossman), who knows all about the world and what has happened to it. I read much that he writes with pleasure and profit, but he is steeped in Marxism, and he is convinced that every phase of history can and ought to be "schematized"—I believe that is the right word—according to the Marxian pattern, the pattern of the dialectic which Marx derived from his philosophical master, Hegel. Having read this book I am tempted to set down certain observations that occur to me, less with the intention of arguing with the writer than of clearing my own mind about ideas which I have found and still find to be extremely difficult.

Mr. Crossman's attitude to Marx is not quite that of the Marxist *pur sang*, for he admits that some criticisms of the master are permissible. Having made this admission he adds :

"These criticisms do not detract from the gigantic achievement of Marx himself. As Engels said at his grave: 'Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history. . . . Marx also discovered the special law of motion governing the present-day capitalist method of production and the bourgeois society that this method has created.' Engels' comparison of Marx with

Darwin is fully justified. They were the greatest of all the Victorians. Both of them revolutionized men's outlook on life and set science on a new path. But just as Darwinism has been modified later, so Marx's special law which dealt with history in the making needed revision. Those who grasped Marx's philosophy felt unable to remain loyal Marxists, while the Marxists, by turning his theories into dogmas, lost the power of self-modification which is essential to science but so awkward for politicians"—(page 234).

I turn back a page to discover in what respect "Marx's special law which deals with history in the making" needs revision and I find it briefly stated in this passage :

"Any science must abstract certain features from the welter of events and predict their regular recurrence in terms of a general law. But if Marx (and Hegel) were right in asserting that the historical dialectic produced new syntheses unintelligible in the categories of the previous epoch, then no special theory of social science can for long give safe ground for prediction. Moreover, any particular interpretation such as Marx provided will itself go out of date as history develops"—(page 233).

This passage is deeply involved in the complicated language which seems to be necessary in all discussions of Marxism, but, reduced to simple terms, it seems to mean that historical developments are beyond the power of living men to understand, much less to predict. They may understand what happened to the previous generation, but that gives them no clue to what is happening to themselves. If that is so, how can they frame what men of science would call "a law of history"—i.e. a law which would "abstract certain features from the welter of events and predict their regular recurrence." (Mr. Crossman's own words.) (In fact, what Marx and Hegel do, is not to formulate a law in any scientific sense of that word, but simply to assert—the word is Mr. Crossman's own—that history moves in a particular way—thesis, antithesis, synthesis.)

But again, in what sense can this assertion be called scientific or be compared to the Darwinian law of evolution, and how can the thing called dialectic "produce" events? Darwin derived his theory from a long and patient observation of natural fact; Marx, following Hegel, derived his from his inner consciousness, for which "dialectic" is only another and more pretentious name. The idea that positives are dogged by their negatives, and negatives by their positives, as the substance is dogged by its shadow, has a certain meaning in the logic of thought. The idea of light may be said to imply that of darkness and the idea of darkness that of light. But to jump from this to the conclusion that things or events are involved in a parallel conflict with other things and events supposed to be their opposites is an excursion in Wonderland. It is at best a purely intuitional conclusion arrived at in a manner which is as remote as possible from Darwin's patient experimental method. Revision of it in the manner suggested does not bring the supposed law up to date but destroys it.

Nor could anything be less scientific than the Marxian terminology. Science requires precise definitions, but who can attach any precise meaning in a historical context to the terms "synthesis" and "antithesis"? It is assumed throughout Marxian literature, as a self-evident proposition, that Socialism is the antithesis or opposite of Capitalism. Why? In our own country and under our eyes we see capitalism carrying on its back a large part of what is ordinarily called Socialism, and at each step raising a presumption that the two systems, if they can be called systems, ought to be reconciled with a modicum of human wisdom. Similarly, with most of the supposed opposites in history—feudalism and industrialism, mediæval society and "bourgeoisie"—they can all just as well, and much more scientifically, be regarded as supplementary and complementary to one another, the one growing out of the other by the

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pressure of events. Scientifically speaking, nothing could be more completely meaningless than the assertion that the "class-less" society is the "synthesis" of the clash between capitalism and socialism. Who can believe that violent men like dictators will peacefully pass from the scene and let government "wither away"?

History is of course rightly interpreted as at any given moment the resultant of innumerable forces, including ideas and ideals, some of which, it need not be denied, are at times in conflict with one another, but which on the whole are capable of reconciliation, if human beings can be accredited with any degree of intelligence and mutual forbearance—as of course they cannot be if they are in the grips of "economic determinism," the supposed law which involves them in an eternal dance of positives and negatives.<sup>1</sup>

### II

But Mr. Crossman himself appears to concede the greater part of what I have been saying when he reproaches his fellow-Marxists—"degenerate Marxists" he calls them—for failing to recognize that the master's theory was "relative only to a single phase of development" and needed to be "modified radically" when the facts on which it rested had disappeared. On this particular issue my sympathies are with the "degenerates." For they may well ask what is the value of a theory which professes to explain events and "predict" their regular recurrence in terms of a general law" (Mr. Crossman's own definition of scientific method)

<sup>1</sup> One exception the Marxian *pur sang* appears to admit. At the cataclysmic moment when the pre-determined class conflict has reached its climax the leader or "revolutionary expert" may step in and take charge. This is the queer turn which Marxism gives to the generally accepted idea that anarchy is the opportunity of tyranny.

if at each phase of development it has to be revised to bring it into conformity with the events which it was supposed to explain and predict ? The idea of historical truth being relative to its own period is a perfectly sound one, and if the Marxist, "degenerate" or otherwise, will in future confine himself to that, he will be on the same ground as the ordinary modest historian. But what in that case would remain of the theory except a mere assertion that there is an as yet undiscovered rhythm of history which, in the long run, will cause events to turn upon themselves in the manner divined (I use this word in its precise significance) by Marx and Hegel ?

Here too science may put in a word. If it has anything to say to the historian it would, I think, first of all bid him remember the enormous extension of time in the thought of the present generation. Astronomy, geology and archæology have joined hands in this. Their united efforts enable us to look back over millions of years in which the animal has evolved into the sub-human, the sub-human into the human, and the human into the civilized or partially civilized ; and bid us look forward to millions of years in which in all probability the earth will remain habitable. In these vast backward and forward abysms of time the history of what we call civilization covers at most some six or seven thousand years. If, therefore, science is appealed to, it must say that the period is far too short to deduce from it any general law predicting the regular recurrence of events. There are interpretations of life beyond the reach of science, but so far as it is invoked, we may say with great confidence that it offers no warrant whatever for the grandiose and fatalistic speculations—Marxian, Spenglerian or any other—which have darkened the minds of so many of the rising generation.

## III

( But Marxism has not been content merely to assert that history is governed by the thesis-antithesis-synthesis rhythm ; it has gone on to assert that this rhythm itself is governed wholly by economic factors. Hence the historical dialectic requires us to believe in economic determinism. We are now well on the way to a new Athanasian creed. )

If economists had been philosophers, or philosophers economists, "economic determinism" would, I believe, have had very short shrift. But the philosophers have trusted the economist to provide the facts, and the economists have been only too well-disposed to a theory which led to the conclusion that there was nothing in history but economics. Moreover, the neglect by some historians of the importance properly to be assigned to economic facts has given plausibility to the reaction which declares history to be all economics. Between the men of fact and the men of theory "economic determinism" has slipped into the language without any serious criticism, and provided a pseudo-philosophical backing for one of the crudest appeals ever made to poverty against wealth.

That is founded on another part of Marx's theory, his doctrine of "surplus value." Millions to whom "economic determinism" was pure mystification knew only too well what was meant when they were told that capitalists were robbing them of what rightfully belonged to them, what they had earned by their labour and been intercepted under the lying pretext of remunerating capital. ( Socialists have joined with orthodox economists in riddling Marx's idea of "surplus value"—the theory that the whole value of a product depends on "labour" and therefore ought to be paid back to "labour," and no part of it be annexed, or, as he would say, confiscated, in the form of profit or

remuneration, by capitalists.) The denial of value to the various services—planning, managing, designing, inventing, organizing—which contribute to the making of things, and may even be said to give value to manual labour, is so obviously nonsensical that his apologists have been reduced to arguing that Marx could not have meant what he obviously did mean.

That, so far as it goes, is a sign of grace, but the Marxian who accepted this criticism failed to see that he had cut away the ground from the whole idea of class conflict. This requires the grand simplification which masses the two hosts, bourgeois and proletariat, into their separate camps, the one regarded as the possessing class and the other as the dispossessed, the one as having appropriated the "surplus values," the other as having been despoiled of them.<sup>1</sup> Only so was it possible for Marx to make the clean-cut division between exploiters and exploited which his theory required and to present his form of revolution as differing from all others that had preceded it in that it would make an end of an exploiting class and place in power the proletariat which was the maker and therefore the rightful owner of wealth. This, and not economic determinism is the dynamic—indeed one might say the dynamite of Marxism—and this it is that has given it its revolutionary power.

Herein too has lain its disaster. If the object is to relieve poverty, nothing is more desirable than a sober analysis of what Marx called "surplus value," that which remains after the wages of manual labour have been paid. How much of this must be absorbed in maintenance and the provision of working capital, in the salaries of managers

<sup>1</sup> Hence his elaborate attempts to prove that all labour can be reduced to something which he calls "simple labour" or "generalized human labour" by reckoning a small quantity of skilled labour as equal to a larger quantity of "simple labour."

directors, engineers and scientific workers, in the services of middle-men and advertisement? When all this necessary provision has been made, as it must be, under any economic system, how much of what remains is being wasted or turned to unsocial uses by capitalists? How much could be transferred from capitalists to wage-earners? Only by such analysis shall we discover what are the possibilities of increasing the general well-being by a revolution which dispossesses the Capitalist.

Wherever this analysis has been made it leads to the same conclusion. When provision has been made for the various services that are indispensable to industry under any system the amount that would be made available as an addition to the worker's wage by a revolution which dispossessed the rich would be only a small fraction of the so-called "surplus value." It has been estimated that if the whole of what the rich or well-to-do classes consume on pleasure and luxury were handed over peacefully to a dictator of the proletariat and the whole of it handed out by him to the workers, he would not be able to add more than 4s. a week to the average family wage in Great Britain. A similar inquiry in the United States leads to much the same conclusion for that country.

Thus at the end of it all the class-conflict supposed to be predestined in the womb of time would, so far as it had any economic object in view, be only about the disposal of this relatively trifling fraction, which and much more would almost certainly be destroyed in fighting about it. This in fact is what has happened in the countries in which the different kinds of political chaos that followed war have led to revolutions of the left or right. These have resulted in tyrannies buttressed by immense bureaucracies which in their emoluments and perquisites almost certainly absorb more of the "surplus value" than is consumed by capitalists and the idle rich in other countries.

If economic advantage is the object, all analysis, verified over and over again by recent experience in Britain, France and the United States, proves that it can only be obtained by an increase of production which must be a co-operative effort of workers by hand and brain, and never can be achieved by any sort of conflict. Education and what may roughly be called the modern movement have between them created an idea of well-being to which, with all its developments, industry is as yet unequal. Progress may even be said to depend on this idea keeping in advance of the means of satisfying it, as it probably always will. The attempt to satisfy it by redistributing the existing product has very severe limits and, if pursued beyond these, leads inevitably to inflation and a general lowering of the standard of life. The supposed "inherent contradictions of capitalism" whereby it piles up unsaleable surpluses and thus destroys itself and creates "poverty in plenty" will be found on examination to be mainly due to the system of tariffs and quotas which prevent the free flow of goods between country and country. A country which produces cotton for export inevitably piles up an unsaleable surplus if, owing to its own policy or that of its neighbours, it is unable to sell cotton abroad. But this is a vice not of capitalism which, if left to its own devices, would favour the system of free markets, but of the excessive nationalism which, under any economic system, is an obstruction to prosperity.

The attempt to analyse revolution or social discontent in purely economic terms fails as completely as all other attempts to reduce history to a formula. Human beings have a great many other emotions besides a desire for wealth. At any critical moment in international affairs the appeal to the national or patriotic consciousness sends the class-consciousness far into the background. Aristotle said that it was not so much inequalities of wealth as inequalities

of honours and offices that drive men to rebellion. It is this which gives substance to the desire for a "class-less" society. As a reality I believe that to be unattainable and even undesirable. It is an insipid ideal which assumes human beings to have been reduced to the same flat level of capacity and achievement. But as a protest against the foolish distinctions and gross inequalities of opportunity that artisocratic systems have handed on to modern times it has meaning and value. This too moves, and will do so more rapidly. Looking back on the sixty years and more of which I have memories, I should say that the fusion of classes is one of the tendencies that have made steady progress in England in these years. The pettiness and rigidity of class distinctions, as they still were in the middle of the nineteenth century, would scarcely be believed by the present generation.

If the Marxist would confine himself to saying that class-distinctions and the snobbishness and social schisms which arise out of them are serious obstacles not only to the economic co-operation necessary to prosperity but to a happy and self-respecting life, he would be well justified.

Mr. Crossman leaves me breathless with his gallopings through history. The confident generalizations with which he sweeps up periods and centuries, his ingenious way of using terms drenched in Marxist associations, "bourgeois," "capitalism," "entrepreneur," "exploitation," in writing of societies for which they would either have had no meaning or quite different meanings, dazzle and confuse a more pedestrian reader. The words thesis and antithesis are so vague that almost anything can be read into them, but I cannot think that it would have occurred to any normally intelligent man to interpret history in this way, unless it had been put into his head to do so. The normal impression that history makes is not of jerks from positive to negative

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but of gradual development in which institutions that are outworn are replaced, sometimes by violence and revolution, but more often by a slow evolution which continues when violence has come and gone. There are a dozen approaches to it, the economic, the religious, the military ; it may be written as the ascent of man and the martyrdom of man, the story of his greed and folly, of his heroism and his unconquerable mind. It may be represented as the operation of blind forces, or of the mastery of them by human endeavour. All these versions are true and all are false, in so far as they claim to be the whole truth. The story is far too complicated to be simplified by any formula. Marx undoubtedly has made a contribution of value, and curiously enough in a manner which is least in line with his creed of determinist materialism. For it is the protest implicit in his chapters on industrialism against the treatment of human beings as raw material for industry that has had and still has a great and most salutary influence in the modern world. That is especially valuable in an age in which the impersonal public company has become the principal employer, but it would have had little meaning if man were only "what he eats" or the unresisting product of economic forces that the rest of the theory requires.

## IV

I am not clear what part of the Marxist theory Mr. Crossman adopts or what he discards as out of date, but he repeats so often that "changes in the technique of production and distribution were the primary factors in the dialectic of history" that I suppose he may be assumed to accept this idea. It is in any case worth examining.

One of the most striking (and strangest) facts in history

is the apparent stagnation in the technique of production and distribution from the earliest times to the beginning of the steam and machine age towards the close of the eighteenth century. How was it, we ask, that with their mastery of steam-heating as seen in their baths and villas, the Romans never thought of employing steam as power? There is a legend that there was a model of a steam engine in the Museum of Alexandria in the second century A.D., but if it existed it began and ended there. Up to the middle of the eighteenth century, men, horses, wind and water continued, as in the earliest days, to be the sources of power, and limited production, transport and all other human activities accordingly. It was not at all uncommon for a traveller at the beginning of the nineteenth century to spend two days at sea crossing from Boulogne to Folkestone, and in 1835, when he was summoned from Rome to form a Government, Sir Robert Peel took as long in getting to London as the Emperor Hadrian had taken in getting from Rome to York.

If we take industries in detail, there were no doubt changes, but they were all changes within these limits. Visiting the Lyons Museum and considering its examples of hand-embroidery and hand-woven fabrics, one wonders whether the highest perfection was not reached in the earliest times. Similarly with the potter's art and the jeweller's art and the numerous other crafts of which we have examples in primitive times. Was anything more exquisite ever produced than the jewellery of the early Egyptian dynasties (somewhere about the date 3000 B.C.) as seen in the Cairo Museum, or than the furniture brought from Egyptian tombs belonging to the second millennium B.C.? Has the potter's art ever surpassed the Cretan vases of about the same date or the Greek vases of the sixth and fifth centuries? In all these arts and crafts the technique of production seems to have reached perfection in the

earliest times and to have varied little before the age of steam-power.

Nor is the story different if we turn to the heavier industries. The Pyramid-builders surpassed all others in gigantesque structures until the American came on the scene with his steel and concrete sky-scrappers. The mediæval builders invented new forms or adapted them from the east, but their technique of production differed little from that of the Greeks and Roman, or for that matter, the Egyptian and Babylonian. Transport and distribution tell the same tale. The archæologist has brought to light the well-organized system of banking and letters of credit which was developed throughout the middle-east in the earliest times, and which probably reached a higher perfection in the first two centuries of the Roman Empire than in any of the subsequent centuries until the discovery of America and the routes to the East led to the rise of the great banking houses which financed the trade which followed. In these developments we have all the elements of what a modern calls "capitalism" following of necessity upon the expansion of trade. Undoubtedly in the nineteenth century new forms were developed to meet the immense acceleration and increase of trading activities, but nothing less corresponds with the facts than the idea that "capitalism" is a sinister invention of modern industrialists seeking to get the better of their fellows, and vitiated from within by "inherent contradictions." No one invented capitalism, it is in no sense a system, it has no Marx or Lenin for its prophets; it is a perpetually changing method of doing business. Being a human institution it is of course liable to the perversions of greed and folly, but I do not think it would be at all an exaggeration to say that the all-but automatic balancing of accounts through the mechanism of exchange in international trade was one of the great achievements of the nineteenth century, and that the

destruction of this system by war and inordinate nationalism has been one of the great disasters of the modern world.

If there is any great divide in human history it will be found in the coming of steam at the end of the eighteenth century. The consequences were a new and rapid development in all directions which so altered the balance and structure of society as to make it more than ever difficult to predict its future by any analogies fetched from the past. The enormous increase of the population of Europe in the subsequent century presented problems for which there was no parallel in past times. Nothing on the face of it could be more improbable than that this modern world would repeat the experience of the little Greek City-states or that its evolution would be parallel to that of the emergence of the mediæval from the ancient, or that the modern "bourgeois" would be under some compulsion to behave like a mediæval burgess. History undoubtedly has lessons to teach, but they are lessons about human nature and its behaviour in given circumstances, which offer warning and instruction, always with the proviso *mutatis mutandis*, but providing no sufficient material for the plotting of a curve predicting and determining the future. Thucydides exposed the behaviour of men in war in a manner that makes his history a possession for ever; Plato's portrait of the tyrannical man and the democratic man, and his analysis of the stages by which revolution produces anarchy, and anarchy breeds tyranny, are inexhaustibly true; Burke's misgivings about the "coxcombs of philosophy" whom he saw talking away the foundations of society without providing anything to put in their place may well be reflected in the modern Book of Wisdom. That men will not learn of experience and that statesmen constantly repeat the mistakes of their predecessors is certainly a theme that runs through history. But this unfortunately does not

enable us to foretell the next mistakes and their consequences, or to predict what turn scientific discovery may give to the next phase of human history. A hundred years from now new systems may have been discovered—new forms of co-operative production and the distribution of profits—which will make all our present controversies about Capitalism and Socialism and the class-conflict seem ridiculously out of date.

There is in fact nothing in the modern vaticinations—Marxism, Spenglerian, or any other—which requires us to correct the familiar apothegm that prophecy is the most gratuitous form of error.

## v

According to Mr. Crossman, I cannot be a competent witness of anything that happened in my time. Since Marx and Hegel have asserted that “the historical dialectic produces new syntheses unintelligible in the categories of the previous epoch,” I, being without the necessary clue, cannot be expected to understand what the dialectic was doing behind my back. The period to me is all alive with the activities of human beings, their struggles about Ireland and the constitution of Parliament, about education and finance and the social services, their reluctant entry into the Great War, their hopes and disillusionment in the years afterwards. In my lifetime I have seen and heard Gladstone, Disraeli, Salisbury, Balfour, Lansdowne, Harcourt, Morley, Asquith, Grey, Carson, Ramsay MacDonald, Snowden, Keir Hardie, and watched their jousts and clashes. Some of them I have known intimately and they have taken me into their confidence about their motives and movements. I have been presumptuous enough to think I knew something about the history of my own time. My junior

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tells me I am greatly mistaken. Though we knew it or not, we were engaged in an incessant dance of isms, ologies and categories, with the predetermined inevitable class-conflict for its permanent background. Human beings, as such, almost fade out of his picture. We were wraiths and phantoms whirled about by forces of which we were unaware and, by the necessity of the case, were unable to understand. We were not, as we thought, persons doing things ; we were bits and ends of capitalism, industrialism, bourgeois Liberalism, Fabianism, Marxism, Syndicalism, and the many other strange members of the constantly multiplying anonymous family.

I am dreadfully out of my depth in this whirlpool of words, but now and again I find something that strikes a chord in my memory Thus :

“Partly because its aims have been so modest, partly owing to the peculiar advantages enjoyed till recently by British industry, Liberal-Socialist ideas in Britain have been singularly successful in winning concrete benefits for the mass of the people, and in converting the ruling classes to a conciliatory social policy, until Fabianism has become not the battle-cry of a party but the accepted philosophy of British government.

“In brief, the peculiar good fortune of British industrial and imperial development after 1850 prevented the growth among British industrial workers of a revolutionary political tradition. Instead, the Labour leaders, like their German equivalents, became even more deeply imbued with the ideals of bourgeois Liberalism than the middle classes, since they believed that under an expanding capitalism they could gain more through constitutional democracy than through the revolutionary struggle for a new idea and a new society.”

Unless it is seriously believed that turning things upside down in a revolutionary struggle would have been the better way, these are handsome tributes to the political good sense of “bourgeois Liberal” capitalists. But again in the world of the Marxist philosophy we are all in the grip

of the "dialectic," and it would be foolish to give credit for anything. For undiscoverable purposes of its own the dialectic seems to permit occasional deviations into what ordinary folk would call common sense, but it resumes its sway after brief intermissions in which we have been deceived into thinking that we are free agents doing things for ourselves.

Once more one is reduced to saying that, perverse as the nature of things may be, it cannot be quite so perverse as this doctrine represents it. After thirty years I can still hear the voice of John Morley saying at the end of a dinner-table discussion on what Mr. Crossman would call meta-politics, "it is all stuff and nonsense." My very clever junior will, I hope, not think me discourteous if I say that parts of his book tempt me to this unargumentative retort. But indeed I think we seniors must pluck up courage to say frankly what we think about some of these ideas. Summarily this is that there is no such thing as the "dialectic," that "economic determinism" is a myth, that "thesis, antithesis and synthesis" are words which, like most of the terminology of left-wing literature, may have any meaning or no meaning, according to the convenience of those who use them. In short, that we may lift off our chests and consciences the whole structure of sinister fatalism which has been raised on these words, phrases and myths, and go on our way if not rejoicing at least with a lighter heart.

Mr. Crossman himself encourages me to find this solution. For he proves at the end that Marx himself, though he did not know it and his disciples failed to perceive it, was really at heart a "bourgeois Liberal" of the mid-Victorian type. This explains that strange but amiable aberration (as it seems to me) whereby he gave a happy ending to his otherwise mournful story, and saw government "withering away" as the lions and lambs of the class-conflict lay down

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together in the class-less society. It is a charming thought that Marx was after all a misunderstood "bourgeois Liberal." With that I am content to leave this book, but not without thanking the author for having jogged my thoughts.

## CHAPTER V

### FREUDISM

#### I

To men of my age one of the strangest symptoms of these times is the refurbishing as novelties of theories and doctrines which were familiar subjects of debate when we were young. As an undergraduate I listened to lectures on socialism by Professors of Economics and, if my memory serves me, the argument ran much the same course as when Marxism was revived in the twenties of this century as the last new thing in economic speculation. True, the Professors of Economics in those days had not the touch with Hegelian philosophy which is needed for probing into the depths of "dialectical materialism," but by sticking to their economics they succeeded in presenting a criticism of the Marxian theory of "Surplus Value" which has never since been successfully assailed. It is at least to their credit that they avoided the peculiar obfuscation which followed when philosophers who knew nothing of economics and economists who knew less of philosophy got to work on this business. That was the real novelty when Marxism was revived in the twentieth century, and it has needed more industry than most people think worth while to puzzle it out.

So with the other great novelty of these times which is labelled Freudism. That goes hand in hand with Marxism in advanced modern thought, and their union is scarcely a

coincidence. Both minister to the idea which has so strong a hold on the modern mind that things are other than they seem to be, Marx proving that history is a manifestation of irresistible underground forces, Freud that the simplest behaviour, as it might be supposed to be, is the result of hidden and generally sexual impulses. If we follow these two—or follow them, it is fairer to say, as interpreted by their disciples—we get the sense of living in a half-magical world in which certain alleged scientific forces play the parts that were assigned to demons and devils in ancient and mediæval times. There is this, however, to be said in favour of the middle ages that they did believe in the existence of benevolent protective forces, the "Angels and Archangels and all the Company of Heaven," whom they supposed to have us in their keeping, whereas the moderns leave us wholly at the mercy of their demons and devils.

## II

The philosophy of the unconscious has been a familiar theme since philosophers began to talk or write. No small part of what is now called Freudism may be found in the "Republic" of Plato who bases his theory of education on drenching the childish mind with sights and sounds which may sink into what is now called the subconscious part of it and there remain fixed through life. It is beautifully dressed up in Plato and for many years I had by heart the passage describing how in the ideal city children grow up amid fair sights and sounds and the wind of beauty is wafted on eye and ear and draws them insensibly from earliest childhood to love of their kind and harmony with the beauty of reason :

"So shall our youth dwell in the region of health and gather strength wherever the beauty that is born of fair works strikes

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upon eye and ear, like a breeze bearing health from a wholesome land, insensibly leading them from childhood upwards into unity, affinity and harmony with right reason."— ("Republic," III, page 401.)

It seemed as wise as it was charming, but in these days, when Communists, Nazis and Fascists have worked by the same method to inure the youthful mind to hatred, violence and blood lust, I read it with a slight shudder. For the discovery that the mind of the child is wax on which its seniors can stamp any pattern of their own devising and fix it there indelibly before it comes to years of discretion is one of the most dangerous abominations of these times. The Churches have played with it, but the patterns they sought to fix in this way were at least in conformity with general beliefs about duty and the Christian life. The modern practitioners of the art make no secret of their intention to fix the character of the child in an attitude of hatred, malice and all uncharitableness to all who are not of its sect or tribe. For this end they deliberately exploit the childish subconscious. This is an outrage on youth which has a large responsibility for the present situation in Europe. No small part of the struggle for liberty must be directed to recovering for youth its freedom to think its own thoughts and make up its mind when it comes to years of discretion.

But this is not the end of the story. While the exploitation of the subconscious in the youthful and subsequently in the mass mind has been carried to a high perfection by political propagandists, the parallel but more subtle movement, which for short I have called Freudism, has had the similar result of exalting instinct and dethroning reason and moral responsibility in the individual mind. Both movements rest on the assumption that the subconscious is a reservoir of uncivilized tribal or sexual emotions which the more benevolent assume can be sublimated by

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treatment and the less benevolent seek to evoke by the incitements of propaganda. Whichever way it is taken, this assumption cuts so deep into the moral and political foundations that it seems to me to need the most careful examination before it is accepted as true or necessary.

### III

Forty years ago the idea of the subconscious carried with it no similar implications. Men of my age got our knowledge of it mainly from Frederic Myers whose book "Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death" is quite as much a classic of the subject as any work of the later psychologists. The scientific world ignored it largely because of its careful examination of telepathy and spiritism and its cautious conclusion in favour of the belief in survival. Science in those days, in spite of the witness of some of its most eminent disciples, sniffed at any disposition to take psychical studies seriously and branded as "unscientific" all books which strayed in this direction. The elaborate work done since by the Psychical Research Society has considerably softened this attitude and will, I hope, ensure a more respectful consideration of Myers's work, now that it is republished.

There is in the index to this work, which was first published in 1903, one reference to Freud, whom Myers has heard of as a Vienna physician applying hypnotism to the treatment of nervous maladies. Myers by no means denies that there is in the subconscious or subliminal self, as he generally prefers to call it, a certain sedimentary element which may be sexual. But this, in his view, is one part and not by any means the greater part of the truth. The subconscious, in his exposition of it, is the well-spring of our deepest thoughts and feelings, that which places us in

touch with universal being, the source of poetry, music, inspiration, prophecy. In a profoundly interesting chapter, in which he cites the witness of musicians and poets to their process of "inward audition," he defines genius as an "uprush from the subliminal"!

"It is not from careful poring over the mutual relations of musical notes that the masterpieces of melody have been born. They have come, as they came to Mozart, in an uprush of unsummoned audition of unpremeditated and self-revealing joy. They have come, as to Browning's Abt Volger, with a sense of irrecoverable comminglings of depths of soul and heights of heaven. . . . We have reached a point where the subliminal uprush is felt by the supraliminal personality to be deeper, truer, more permanent than the products of voluntary thought."—(Myers, I, page 103.)

This is not mere sentimentality; it is a conclusion reached by a most careful accumulation of facts and in a manner which is not less entitled to be regarded as scientific because the inquirer has a mind which is open to their emotional and poetical, as well as to their physical and mechanical significance.

Long before Freud was heard of eminent French psychologists, such as Binet, Janet and de Curel, and other Austrians, like Breuer, had been at work on the physical side of the unconscious, and Myers pays a handsome tribute to their research and its value in mental healing. "Even the most delicate speculations in this line," he says, "have found their proliferation in helpful act. Strange bewilderments, paralysing perturbations, have been soothed into sanity by some appropriate and sagacious mode of appeal to a *natura medicatrix* deep-hidden in the labouring breast."

Myers did not foresee, however, that this side of it would be laid hold of and exploited as the whole truth to the exclusion of all other aspects of it. This is the way of the medical specialist, or, at all events, his natural temptation.

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I have heard a specialist in rheumatoid arthritis declare that this comparatively rare disease is "the scourge of the human race." In the same way the cancer specialists, the abdominal specialists, the gland specialists are tempted to magnify their calling and betray the bias of their benevolent occupations by greatly exaggerating the prevalence of the complaints which they are endeavouring to cure. Small blame to them, but they are for this reason very uncertain guides in determining the operation of any given cause in the average case. Engaged all day in dealing with its morbid manifestations, they conclude that these are ubiquitous and common to all mankind.

This, I suggest, is what has happened to the theory associated with the name of Freud (I carefully use that expression, for it would be wrong to saddle Freud with all that bears his name). It is largely a generalisation which medical men engaged in ministering to morbid cases have applied to the whole field of psychology about which, to say the least, many of them are very imperfectly informed. The idea of suppressed instincts is no doubt a clue to certain nervous disorders, but to jump from this to the conclusion that a suppressed sexualism is at the root of all human emotions is to fly in the teeth of common experience and probability. If a competent neurologist tells me that he finds a useful analogy to certain obscure sexual disorders in the unpleasing Greek myth of Oedipus, I shall not dream of disputing with him, but if he asserts that the "Oedipus complex" is a fundamental part of the normal human psychology, I feel justified in telling him that the common sense which rejects this idea as fantastic and improbable is much more likely to be right than he is.

Some of our moderns seem to take a special pleasure in their supposed discovery of the nastiness of the human animal and, if it were backed by scientific proof, we should be bound to accept it and adjust our thoughts accordingly.

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We are, however, under no such necessity. Myers's analysis of the subconscious is just as well attested by fact and much more in line with experience and probability than the Freudian or what is commonly so-called. It is intrinsically much more probable that the subconscious self reflects the varieties of the conscious than that it is absorbed in sex to the exclusion of all other human emotions and attributes. Here we see the effect of that passion for monistic explanations which possesses so many of our advanced thinkers. It is not enough for the Marxist that economics should be one element in human history ; it must be the whole and sole explanation ; it is not enough for the Freudian that sex should be one element in human nature, it must swamp and extinguish all other elements.

## IV

Let us restore the thought that human nature has a rich and varied content which both the psychologist and the historian must be prepared to study with patience, sympathy and understanding, abjuring all the short-cuts and meretricious simplifications which dazzle without explaining. The Freudian patter of complexes and inhibitions—the suggestion that conscience is a morbid by-product of the repression of instincts to which nature intended us to give free play—lends a pseudo-scientific veneer not merely to sexual, but to all other kinds of social indiscipline. The thief and the murderer, as well as the adulterer and the libertine, may be indulgently regarded as the victim of repression and inhibition. The doctrine is inherently one of anarchy cutting at the roots not merely of religious sanctions, but of all that experience has evolved as necessary restraints upon natural instincts and appetites.

The Freudian influence has been specially strong in recent

years upon the writers of novels, some of whom have come near reducing their works to pathological case-books in sexual neurosis. This is said to be a courageous facing of facts as revealed by the new psychology, but the picture which in general it represents is that of a small corrupt society—generally in affluent circumstances—which sacrifices not merely what puritans call the moral code, but all that normal human beings call honour and faithfulness for the gratification of the sexual impulse. This may be in accord with the experience of these circles, but as a picture of humankind as it normally lives it is totally, even absurdly, wide of the mark. Great novels take sex and its tragedies in their sweep without shirking any of the facts, but keep touch with the normal and universal in human nature. Meredith, who was no prude, is worth hearing on this point :

"I strive by study of humanity to represent it: not its morbid action. I have a tendency to do that, which I repress: for in deprecating it there is no gain. In all my, truly, very faulty works there is this aim. Much of my strength lies in painting morbid emotion and exceptional positions; but my conscience will not let me so waste my time. My love is for epic subjects—not for cobwebs in a putrid corner; though I know the fascination of unravelling them."<sup>1</sup>

The last twenty years have produced some remarkable novels which deal with the whole of life in this spirit, but if one wants to know the reason why so much clever fiction is wholly out of touch with the common kind, it is because it deliberately deals with "cobwebs in putrid corners." The Freudian monism which attributes everything to sex, leads almost inevitably to this result.

## V

The world has always been in difficulties about its judgment on the sins of sex. There are two elements in

<sup>1</sup> "Letters," I, page 171.

it not easily distinguished. There is the element of unfaithfulness in the most abiding of human relationships about which the ethical judgment cannot waver ; there is the pull of physical passions about which human beings, knowing their own infirmities, are reluctant to pass judgment. On the whole, the general judgment, outside a small circle of the sophisticated well-to-do, has remained pretty clear about unfaithfulness which it still visits with its social penalties, while it is charitable about indulgence without the taint of unfaithfulness or the accompaniment of scandal. Some thirty years ago I was a member of the Royal Commission on the marriage laws, and listening to the evidence given about the moral code of the very poor I was greatly struck by the severity of their judgment on unfaithfulness and the leniency of their judgment on "irregular connections." Whether they were married or not, a man was expected to be faithful to his woman and she to him. About this their neighbours judged and acted accordingly.

The reaction from Puritanism is one of the recurring themes of history, but the different kinds of this reaction in different periods deserve more study than has been given them. There is the Falstaffian reaction of the multitude ; there is the corrupt but courtly reaction of the cavalier ; there is the cynical reaction of the man of the world. All these we may trace from the sixteenth century onwards. There is, however, one clear distinction between the other reactions and the modern reaction. The most reckless libertine in the former days never denied the distinction between vice and virtue. He continued to pay the homage which vice pays to virtue. The modern blurs the line by a supposed scientific theory which questions the responsibility for either vice or virtue. The modern reaction is a sophisticated reaction. There is a stuffiness and artificiality about it which takes it out of the category of natural revolts against the suppression of nature. It is founded

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on a theory, argued intellectually and declared to be a logical conclusion from scientific premises. In that guise it makes a subtle appeal to the clever young moderns who like to think themselves "in the movement" and are in the stage of revolt against traditions and principles.

For that reason the guise should be stripped off and the thing presented for what it is, i.e. a hasty and quite unjustified generalization from the morbid to the normal. This is the more necessary since the new doctrine undermines the self-respect which human beings owe to themselves and represents moral behaviour as due to causes that are beyond control. The republication of Myers's book is to be welcomed as a means of restoring the true doctrine which regards the subconscious as a profound and worthy part of our personality, reflecting in its depths the varieties of the conscious part of us, liable no doubt to disease and perversion, but the source of genius and inspiration and our point of contact with the reality of which we are part.

## CHAPTER VI

### PROPAGANDA AND PRESS CONTROL

#### I

SINCE the outbreak of war, I have found myself growing more and more sceptical about the art of "propaganda" and its uses. Never was anything quite so confused as the hubbub which arose about the Ministry of Information. That much maligned Ministry seems to have started without any clear idea of what it was intended to do, and its critics were equally at sea. There was a vague idea that the late Lord Northcliffe had shortened the last war by a masterly use of this weapon, and it was supposed that the same result might be achieved sooner by an earlier start in the use of his methods by a Ministry set up for the purpose.

There were two observations to be made about this. First, that the German soldiers had almost certainly greatly exaggerated the results of the Northcliffe propaganda in order to make the German people believe that their downfall was due to the practice of this sinister and unworthy device by a cowardly enemy and not, as was actually the case, to the defeat of their army in the field. During the subsequent years the legend of an undefeated Germany has gone hand in hand with an inflated estimate of the potency of British propaganda.

In the next place, there was a remarkable *naïveté* in proclaiming out loud at the beginning of the war, as so many of our propagandists did, that we intended to practise

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again the method against which the German people had now for more than twenty years been persistently warned. Granted that it was successful in the last war, that success depended on its catching the German people unawares in a state of depression and exhaustion after more than four years of war. To announce at the beginning of the war that we were going to repeat and intensify our former methods was to deprive them of half their value. The unceasing talk about propaganda has, I believe, in this way greatly diminished its potency as a weapon in war.

It needed a concrete case to induce us to sort out our ideas on this subject and that to a certain extent was provided by the notorious German broadcaster, "Lord Haw Haw." The demand went up that he should be answered, but how answered? The first thing to be clear about was the nature of his audience, who they were and where they were. Since he spoke in English, the presumption was that the immense majority of his listeners were in the British Isles, in the Dominions, in India and in the United States. Obviously the conditions of debate with him were very unequal. He could appeal to this immense audience, those who answered him could reach only a very small number of Germans, the number who would risk the pains and penalties of listening-in to an enemy broadcaster. These few would hear our ordinary wireless news bulletin or the B.B.C. radio in German. In any case, they were a very small number. The vast majority were the English-speaking listeners in the British Isles, the Dominions and Colonies, the United States. How should these be treated?

To demand a special service for British listeners in answer to Lord Haw Haw was an obvious absurdity. Day by day British newspapers were presenting the Allied cause from a hundred different angles, and if their combined efforts were not equal to the business of answering Haw Haw, we

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might well have despaired of making that cause prevail. One of the oddest features about the demand for more propaganda was that the newspapers which took part in it seemed entirely to ignore their own activities. By far the greatest propaganda machine all over the world is the Press, whether free or controlled. Compared with its regular, daily organ-voice, the thing labelled propaganda can have only a limited range. Apparently it did not occur to the newspapers demanding counter-propaganda to Haw Haw that this was precisely their business and that no Ministry could do it half as well. If there were actually British listeners who were impressed by the German, they were just the sort of people who would have been sceptical about an official answer.

This was scarcely less true of the United States. At the beginning of the war, I received letters from American friends saying, "If you are sending propagandists over here, lecturers, writers, pamphleteers, for heaven's sake call them back. The Germans are doing all the propaganda you need; you have an overwhelmingly favourable Press and public opinion, and you will only spoil it and raise suspicions by butting in. We resent the idea that we are incapable of forming our own opinion. If we were against you, you would not move us by any propaganda; since we are with you, you do not need propaganda." In the last war, when American opinion was much more divided, Cecil Spring Rice, the British Ambassador in Washington, wrote to me in exactly the same terms. Leave the German propaganda, he said, to the Americans. They know how to deal with it; official British propagandists would make an unholy mess of it.

We are on scarcely less delicate ground in dealing with the European neutrals. If Germans and Russians have not by this time made the smaller neutrals aware of what a German victory would mean to them, then they would not

be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. But they live in constant fear lest our activities should give the Germans an excuse for invading their neutrality, and any wooing of them on our part places them in an embarrassing position. They must either reject it or expose themselves to this retaliation. Not to place them in this position is a primary necessity, when we are thinking of propaganda. Here we should confine ourselves to reminding them of the portentous consequences of Nazi doctrine to the smaller States and allaying the fears of a German victory which the German propagandist is for ever instilling into them. There is of course in this respect no propaganda like events, but the fiction which the German is for ever attempting to palm off as fact should never go uncorrected.

India, Egypt and the Middle East present a problem by themselves. Here we are in the presence of peoples who are starting out on democratic experiments on which they greatly pride themselves. To bring home to these peoples that the continuance of these experiments depends absolutely on the victory of the democratic Powers in Europe and that, if they passed under the control of the totalitarians, they would be ruled with the iron hand of the dictators, is the proper work of propaganda. Too much emphasis cannot be laid upon the contrast between the kind of life which the dictators impose on their own peoples and would impose on any Eastern countries they subdued, and the free criticism and free development of self-government which is assured them under British protection. The propagandist is under no necessity to claim that the British system is perfection ; it is sufficient for him to point to the certainty that freedom and self-government would be altogether extinguished if the European dictators won the war.

There is room for intelligent broadcasts, preferably by men of the same race who will not preach or declaim, but

speak on level terms with their own people. But even in the East the thing specifically called propaganda is at a heavy discount. Here, too, the best approach is through the Press. I have spent a great many hours in the course of my life talking to Egyptian and Indian journalists ; many of them are highly intelligent and influential men, and if their sympathies can be invoked they will do the job of influencing their own people far better than we can do it. Any appearance of forcing their hands, trying to convince them against their will, is a mistake. What we need is to tell them what we think to be at stake for them as for us and ask them to co-operate. The great obstacle in India is the feeling of Indians that we expect them to follow our lead instead of asking them to co-operate with us in a common cause. If last year the Government of India could for the time being have forgotten its reserve powers—army, navy and foreign policy—and have taken Congress and the Delhi Assembly into its confidence about the situation in Europe and the problems it presented for India, it would have done its propaganda far better than can be done for it by any outside body after the event.

*Ars est celare artem.* If ever there was an art to which this maxim applies, it is that of propaganda. In vain is the snare set in the sight of the birds. The agitation about it has gone far to destroy its value. The more we lay our stress on the need of skill and cleverness in pursuing it, the more we increase the presumption that our intention is to deceive. The Germans who pride themselves on the perfection of their machinery and the elaborate research which they have brought to bear on it are every day discovering the limits within which deception is possible. No one believes what comes from their factory ; everyone asks not whether it is true but why it is said. A very few lies—Mr. Churchill's sinking of the *Athenia*, Mr. Chamberlain's attempt to assassinate Hitler in the Munich beer-cellar,

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the "great victory" of the *Graf Spee*—reduce the whole business to derision outside Germany. In our own efforts we had better start from the fact that "propaganda" has by this time become a by-word for mendacity and avoid like the plague any statement which may be proved untrue the day after it has been put into circulation.

Patient efforts to correct falsehood or to explain that our war-aims do not threaten the German people with destruction are not "propaganda" in the commonly accepted sense of the word. They should be kept carefully apart from all rhetorical embroidery or appearance of ingratiating or inveigling. The possibility that this method may be used with effect when the proper time comes is a reason the more for guarding it against abuse or discredit meanwhile.

But the main fact to lay hold of is that the Press of the free countries is their great propaganda and that nothing can efface or correct the impression that it makes on the neutral world. The newspaper which demands "propaganda" and at the same time presents its country as divided, quarrelsome and factious, is asking that public money shall be spent on correcting an impression which itself has created. It is of course the business of a free Press to criticize its Government, but it has also to give its country a good show in the eyes of the world in time of war. To keep the two things in a true balance requires discretion, but this ought not to be too much to ask in these dangerous times.

### II

I would suggest to our newspaper magnates that, when peace returns, they should offer a travelling scholarship to some enterprising young man to visit the totalitarian countries and write a report on Government control of the

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press. It is a most mysterious subject about which the world ought to be informed. I once heard an American newspaper proprietor say that his newspaper "developed cataclysmic qualities which it was entirely beyond his power to foresee and control." If this can be said of one paper, what sort of job must it be to bring a score, a hundred, a thousand under one control? Yet that is precisely what has been and is being attempted in three great and several smaller countries.

How is it done? Is there one central department with a Minister in charge controlling what may be called the Metropolitan press, with provincial branches doing the same for the provincial press? Or is a censor appointed to sit in every newspaper office? Are the instructions issued daily, and, if so, what form do they take and what ground do they cover? Is there a central staff which reads all the newspapers to see that they conform to the instructions, and, if they do not, what form does its correction take? Is there a register of certified and licensed journalists, and are they liable to have their licences endorsed or withdrawn, like those of motor-car drivers, after one or more convictions? According to the totalitarian theory the whole ground must be covered in the official control of the press. The newspaper must reflect not only the political views of the leader, but his views on home life and the position of women, on art and literature, science and the drama. The Führer has said again and again that there is a "national Socialist view of life" which governs the approach to every subject that a newspaper can handle. The journalist, therefore, must be steeped in this *Weltanschauung*. He must have the same instinctive apprehension of National Socialist ways of thinking as the good Catholic has of the Catholic way of thinking. He must see at a glance that a picture or a play or a poem is an offence to right thinking; he must beware of the science which conflicts with the ruling

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philosophy ; he must shudder when the word Jew is mentioned ; he must have the keenest scent for any trace of Jewish influence in art, music or medicine. All this he must do by second nature, for being a journalist who handles things from day to day and hour to hour, he must make up his mind on the spot and cannot for ever be referring back to his superiors for instructions.

At least that is how it logically works out. Under the perfect totalitarian system the journalist would be a sort of priest, trained to the niceties of the ideology which is his theology, expounding day by day the doctrine and the interpretation of fact prescribed by his church. Reading a newspaper would then be a pious duty for the faithful, the equivalent of going to church or reading the Bible for a devout Protestant. Even a slight reading of German newspapers suggests, however, that this stage has not been reached. They speak with their master's voice and are unable to make it sound like their own voice. Their silences and their utterances are too evidently to order. Too often they betray the embarrassment of men waiting for instructions and reduced to marking time until these arrive. When they speak, they do so with the appearance of being drilled into different classes. There are the oracles speaking with official solemnity. There are the sharp-shooters whose object is to make the foreigner's flesh creep. There are the kite-flyers evidently instructed to test opinion. But these varieties do not conceal the essential sameness and monotony of the output. Those who read it under compulsion seem to be agreed that it is extraordinarily dull.

### III

Like other propagandists, the controllers of this kind of journalism seem to forget that to conceal art is a chief part of the art they are trying to practise. This is nothing less

than the art of fooling all the people all the time by inducing them to accept as free and spontaneous what is in fact compulsory and dictated. This, *pace* Abraham Lincoln, may be possible in the more modern conditions that now prevail, but it demands much thought and accomplishment in those who practise it. It is one of the laws of journalism that it can only create a plausible appearance of truth by permitting a considerable margin of error. An infallible newspaper, like an infallible individual, is soon discovered to be an imposture. The artist in press control would, therefore, be wise to let the newspapers splash about in the ordinary way for some time before he steers them to the desired unanimity. Unanimity ceases to be impressive when it is known that the unanimous have no choice. An appearance of freedom is necessary to give it value.

Starting from this basis a modern Machiavelli would, I think, recommend that the controlled press should be divided into two groups, which should be instructed to attack one another on all matters which the dictators thought unimportant or not immediately pressing. These subjects should be scheduled for certain periods during which the newspapers should not only be permitted but instructed to keep attacking. Reasonable notice should be given when it is desired to close these periods, and those who are required to change their line should be encouraged to do so with some show of reluctance, which would lead the reader to suppose that they were convinced against their will by inescapable facts. The desired and final unanimity would, of course, have to be reached by a prescribed date, but there could at least be an appearance of honest conviction moving of its own accord to the unanimous support of the voice of wisdom.

Next, there should be rules for the different degrees of respect paid to individuals. The prostration of the entire profession before all the members of the hierarchy is crude

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and unconvincing. Other people simply do not believe that any company of men can think in this way about their fellow-beings. Here, it seems to me, the original Machiavelli provides a useful pointer. He says : " It should be taken as a general rule that the founder of a State must strive to obtain the sole authority." From which it follows that he must not share his pedestal with any of his fellow-workers or permit them to be spoken of as partaking of his infallibility. A very little extension of this rule would permit certain individuals in his entourage to be scheduled as suitable targets for the sharpshooters of the press, and they, if they were patriotic men who sincerely accepted the doctrine of the unqualified supremacy of the leader, would no doubt cheerfully lend themselves to this degree of martyrdom for his greater glory. How much more convincing, for example, the German press would be—and incidentally how much livelier and more interesting—if one section of it were permitted to say what it really thought about Field-Marshal Goering, and another section what it really thought about Dr. Goebbels ! And, finally, how much more impressive would their tribute to the Führer be when they joined in doing homage to his " exclusive, original, universal, irresistible, independent, inalienable and unrestricted authority ! "

### IV

Machiavelli provides many other hints. The Prince should never be seen doing unpleasant or unpopular things. These should be done through agents who can be reprimanded and punished when they have made themselves too unpopular. The classic instance is that of Cæsar Borgia, who employed Remiro d'Orco to clear up the turbulent province of Romagna, and then when he had done this business and got himself well hated in consequence " had

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him beheaded and exposed his body in the market-place at Cesena with a wooden block and bloody axe by his side." The "ferocity of this spectacle," says Machiavelli, "both appeased and stupefied the people for a while."

This method has its counterpart in what in modern phraseology is called the "purge." When certain individuals have become too unpopular, the press is let loose on them and the dictator proceeds to "liquidate" them, earning thereby great merit for his fidelity to principles and unsleeping regard for the safety of his people. Purges must not be repeated too often, but in proportion as the controlled press is permitted to protest against what in free countries are called "abuses" and to denounce individuals supposed to be responsible for them, it enhances the glory of the infallible dictator, and gives a certain verisimilitude to its controlled efforts. I have often had it pointed out to me by admirers of the Russian system how candid and outspoken is the criticism of the administration by the Russian official press. This criticism prepares the ground when the dictator is about to liquidate those who have incurred his displeasure, and in any case throws his impeccability into high relief against their infamies and infirmities.

The other dictators would, I think, be wise to follow this example more frequently. The picture of a great and good man struggling to overcome the errors and shortcomings incidental to the business of government is more likely to create sympathy than that of an infallible ruler administering a perfect State. The worst of an infallible ruler, whether in Church or State, is that he will insist on our believing the incredible. When an ambassador tells us that his faith and practice is summed up in "blind and absolute obedience to a dictator who is always right," the impression he produces is that of a shop assistant who is instructed to say to himself "the customer is always right."

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No one believes that he believes it. Everyone asks why he says it.

I could make other suggestions, but the sum of the matter is that a bureau controlling the press would need to be composed of highly trained mass-psychologists and artists in journalism, if it were to give the illusion of freedom to its manipulations. The effort is the incredibly difficult one of producing by artificial means what in the free countries in the unconscious, spontaneous result of the daily encounter between truth and error in a thousand free newspapers. The results so far suggest that this problem has been very imperfectly studied in the totalitarian countries.

### V

Napoleon said that he would not survive a month if he permitted the press to be free, and the modern Napoleons are apparently of the same opinion. Yet only extreme necessity could have led any human being to take upon himself the task of editing some hundreds of daily newspapers, and heaven knows how many other sheets and periodicals. To keep a multitude of publications, whose only *raison d'être* is to represent the varieties of opinion, under the control of one authority is to involve that authority in an imposture which, if not successful, is dangerously discrediting. Moreover, in making themselves responsible for the press, the dictators cut themselves off from one of the most potent of diplomatic weapons, which is silence. By the nature of its being, the press is the most garrulous of human institutions, and those who control it have to keep it talking every day with the certainty that millions of listeners all over the world and other countries will hold them responsible for everything that it says. To keep one newspaper provided with talking points day by

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day is difficult enough, as every journalist knows, but to keep a hundred or a thousand thus provided must be a nightmare for those who undertake it. Apparently their decision is that their publics require highly spiced food, and in their effort to provide it they present their Governments as perpetually engaged in the angry politics of inferior journalism. These are only a few of the points which it will be interesting to explore in a scientific spirit when the time comes.



PART II

PORTRAITS AND REMINISCENCES



## CHAPTER I

### GLADSTONE

#### I

[THE other day, in reading a book by one of the moderns who are so scornful of the Victorian age, I came upon a sentence in which Gladstone was disposed of and swept into limbo as “that pompous old windbag.” At this my heart burned within me, and I asked the National Liberal Club to let me include in this book an address which I delivered to the Club on the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation and of the year when Mr. Gladstone became its first President, November 16th, 1937.]

To me and to men of my generation, the name of Gladstone is the brief epitome of an age—the great Victorian age, every phase and mood of which is reflected in his character and career. We see him as its greatest representative man, borne on the tide which, setting in with the Reform Bill of 1832, turned aristocratic England into Liberal and democratic England, abolished many class privileges, broke down sectarianism, extended education to the poor, made the public services accessible to all-comers, gave the country cheap food and opened its ports to the trade of all countries. Beginning as “the rising hope of stern and unbending Tories,” his always developing mind, with his inherent sense of justice and love of liberty, took him from one step to another in a progress which inverted the common experience and made him more youthful as he grew older. He had in the highest degree the Victorian virtues. Unlike

many gifted and eloquent men, he was a master of administrative detail, who brought to the national housekeeping the thrifty and careful mind of a supreme man of business. He was conscientious and dutiful to a degree which made worldlings seriously doubt whether he would ever hold his own in the rough and tumble of politics. He had every gift, said the wise men who cast his horoscope in his early years, except those of a political leader. They saw his deep reverence for British institutions in their historical setting, but not his keen sense of the need of bringing them abreast of modern needs and changing circumstances. "I was brought up," he said, "to distrust and dislike liberty. I learnt to believe in it. That is the key to all my changes." I could illustrate all these qualities from different incidents in his career, but this would be going over familiar ground, and at the end I should be no nearer giving you a picture of the man as my generation remembers him—the live coal burning with zeal for the causes which had fired his imagination or touched his heart.

So for this occasion let me dwell for a moment on the man as I remember him, the old man, the grand old man, as he was about fifty years ago, when he became President of this Club. He had just suffered an overwhelming reverse in the defeat of his first effort to carry Home Rule and the return of the Unionist Party to power by a great majority at the subsequent election. His opponents said he was finally done for, and some even of his own friends hinted that it would be wiser for him to seek a well-earned repose and let the party work its way back to popular favour under some other leadership. He was seventy-eight years old ; he had put his question and received his answer ; honour was satisfied ; many other questions besides Ireland needed the reforming hand. This never for a moment crossed Mr. Gladstone's mind or that of his principal supporters. Here we touch, I think, one of the characteristic

differences between our own politics and those of the United States. An American party when defeated on a major issue evacuates the unfavourable ground as speedily as possible and seeks a new issue for the next advance. Bimetallism was a lost cause when Mr. Bryan was defeated in 1896 ; the League of Nations was a lost cause when Mr. Wilson was defeated in 1920. But in this country defeat is the signal for a renewal of the attack, and to Mr. Gladstone, in his seventy-ninth year, there was only one possible reply to the disaster of 1886, and that was—"one fight more, the best and the last."

His own diary and his biographer's researches give us a peculiarly vivid and intimate picture of what he was doing and thinking in these days after the 1886 election. He sits down and writes a fifty-page pamphlet on the Irish question, nailing his flag to the mast-head and expressing an impenitent resolve to carry it to victory. He then takes a short holiday as a guest of his old friend, Lord Acton, in his house in Bavaria, with the famous German theologian, Dr. Döllinger, as his fellow-guest. Here we see him tramping the Bavarian mountains in company with the theologian, who has been given a copy of the pamphlet, but is apparently unconvinced by it. The two men argue it out, and their argument branches out into the old question of the Vatican decrees which has an inexhaustible interest for both of them. Mr. Gladstone's spirits rise in the mountain air, and on his return home he dashes off an article on the second part, lately published, of Tennyson's "*Locksley Hall*," in which he brings his own buoyant optimism and confident belief in human progress to bear on the poet's pessimism. Then he turns again to theology and marches to the defence of the faith in a review of Mrs. Humphry Ward's "*Robert Elsmere*"—a famous novel dealing with the hard case of a clergyman suddenly assailed with doubt about Christian dogma. He made the fortunes of

the novel and involved himself in an interminable correspondence with Lord Acton about the credentials of the early Fathers. All the time he was reading Irish history and collecting material for speeches in the campaign now preparing. Such was Mr. Gladstone as seen in one little segment of him in his seventy-ninth year—a politician, yes, and an ardent one, but also a man of inexhaustible all-round interests, historical, theological, literary. When he was not otherwise occupied he was reading Homer, Horace and Dante, or writing postcards in minute handwriting to correspondents who fired questions at him from all parts of the country. Experts said that his theology was out of date and his scholarship old-fashioned, but that mattered little beside the fact that he was drenched in his favourite authors. He was the equal of most professional scholars in his knowledge of the texts of Homer, Horace and Virgil, and none of them surpassed him in the aptness of his quotations<sup>1</sup> and his power of finding new meaning in the ancient writers. It was this background which on great occasions gave him the appearance of moving in a large and spacious way through all the departments of human and divine wisdom.

Having witnessed the last of his great battles from its beginning to its close, and heard nearly every important speech that he made in the House of Commons during these years, I can think of no effort by any other individual which for fierce zeal and sustained energy can be compared with it, or which in the same degree displayed a powerful mind concentrated on a single purpose. Though always equal to the great occasions, he was often at his best when he cut suddenly and unexpectedly into a debate. Joseph

<sup>1</sup> One of the aptest of all quotations will be found in one of his speeches on the Irish Church Disestablishment Bill in 1868. In this he applied to Trench, the poet Archbishop of Dublin, Virgil's invocation to the bard Panthus: "Nec te, tua plurima, Panthu, Labentem pietas, nec Apollinis infula texit."

Chamberlain was heard to say after a twenty-minute impromptu by Gladstone, entirely at his expense, "That is the speech I would rather have made than any I ever heard in the House." Except for a few purple passages that hold their place among the gems of Parliamentary oratory, his speeches do not bear quoting apart from their context; but that is no reflection on them for their own purpose. The good Parliamentarian does not prepare literary compositions for the benefit of posterity; he is the child of the hour using words as tools for his political business in the world of action. Gladstone was supreme at that, and he never anticipated his hour by any preparation that would commit him to a particular groove or prevent him from catching the mood of his hearers and giving it back to them in fervent improvisations. I have seen many of his notes for speeches, and as a rule they consisted almost entirely of headings to keep his argument clear, with a few facts, figures and handy quotations grouped under them, and now and again a sentence written out. All the rest was the creation of the moment, prompted by an extraordinary sensitiveness to the currents of opinion which played about him on all sides and liable to digressions on the spur of the moment, which led the speaker into a maze of side-issues from which he somehow got back in triumph to his main road. Reported the next day in the newspapers it often seemed highly involved, but it seldom sounded so, and one of the fascinations of listening to him was to follow the speaker as he threaded his way through sentences of bewildering intricacy until he finally found safety and grammar in a trenchant conclusion.

But Olympian as he was, it would be an entire mistake to think of him as sitting above the clouds in celestial indifference to worldly considerations. As a politician he was both skilful and wary. From his long experience he had evolved a protective armament very difficult to

penetrate. Quoting his old speeches was a favourite game with his opponents, and his sixty years of public life offered a wide field for research in this respect. But he was very seldom caught out. When the speaker had finished reading, he almost invariably said, "Read on," not because he remembered what followed—for that would have been impossible even with his miraculous memory—but because he was quite sure that he had not said what was imputed to him without qualifications which offered a way of escape. When he had to retreat—as happens to every Parliamentary leader—he did so with flags flying and trumpets blaring, until you were amazed at the magnanimity of a small concession from so redoubtable a fighter, if indeed you were aware that he had made any concession at all. He was peculiarly skilful in keeping certain strokes in reserve for the discomfiture of opponents who had been led on in ignorance of what was coming. Labouchere was heard to say on one of these occasions that it was a splendid thing to have the ace of trumps up your sleeve, but better still to be able to persuade yourself, as the Grand Old Man apparently did, that the Almighty had put it there. It was exactly this endearing human quality which made him a man among men, and not a Mahatma in some remote Tibet.

## II

Let me pass for a moment to a more personal memory. I was first introduced to Mr. Gladstone at Lord Brassey's house in the year 1890, and can never forget the flattering courtesy with which he treated an unknown young man as if he were a person of importance who could give him just the information he wanted about political opinion in the north of England, where I was then working. Also I can never forget the complete freedom with which he

poured out his views—some of them rather unexpected—on the then state of affairs. Very great men are very seldom discreet, or, if they are, they manage to conceal it.

Two years later I was in charge of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, then a Liberal paper, in the absence of its editor, in the critical weeks following the 1892 election, and was filled with awe and not a little apprehension at receiving communications from him in his own handwriting. Mr. Gladstone, they ran, would like the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* to know, etc., etc. But to my great disappointment, the things he wished me to know had never the slightest connection with the politics of the hour. They were that the writer of a literary article had misquoted a line from the Italian poet Leopardi, or that someone had stated wrongly that he was defeated at Oxford in the year 1864, whereas the real date was 1865, etc., etc. During the next two years I had to go repeatedly to Downing Street, and now and again I was admitted to the presence and permitted to ask questions, which he answered. But I cannot remember any occasion when he suggested that the *Pall Mall Gazette* or its successor, the *Westminster Gazette*, should take one line in preference to another, or offered advice except directly in answer to questions, or showed the slightest impatience of criticism. He had a great distaste for politicians who prompted the press or played games with it, and there was no more certain way for a colleague to earn his disapproval than to be suspected of this practice. He always professed a real respect for the press, but, in his view, the Minister and the journalist had their separate spheres, and those who mixed them up “didn’t know the rules of the game.” This phrase was often in his mouth, and it was the most damaging sentence he could pass on a fellow-member of the Liberal party.

Sundry little memories come back to me from these years such as going to Downing Street when I had hoped to see

him face to face and being met by Sir Algernon West, who said he must be excused, for he had just come back thoroughly exhausted after a dreadful day with Queen Victoria. Yet he always spoke of her with the greatest respect, praising her sincerity and her dutifulness, her knowledge and her long experience. I have the record of a short talk with him in which, after speaking of Lord Salisbury, who was then Prime Minister, and dwelling on his uprightness and conscientiousness, he wound up by saying, "There is one fault I have to find with him, he does not make enough use of the Court." By the Court he meant the Queen, and he went on to enlarge on the extreme value to a Foreign Secretary, who knew how to use it rightly, of her circle of relationships with foreign sovereigns and their families, and her admirable industry in corresponding with them and conveying to them shades of opinion and feeling which could not be conveyed from Government to Government.<sup>1</sup>

## III

Nothing endeared Mr. Gladstone more to the House of Commons than his gracious and beautiful courtesy. "One of the lessons life has taught me," he wrote in one of his fragments recorded in Morley's life, "is that where there is known to be a common object, the pursuit of truth, there should also be a studious desire to interpret the adversary in the best sense his words will fairly bear; to avoid whatever widens the breach; and to make the most of whatever tends to narrow it. These I hold to be part of the laws of knightly tournament." Torrents of abuse descended

<sup>1</sup> Another Victorian Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, dissented from this view. He said that a Foreign Secretary had to receive with great caution Queen Victoria's information and opinions on foreign affairs. They were apt to be too much coloured by her family and dynastic bias.

on him ; some of the election addresses at the election of 1886, if anyone cares to look them up—Lord Randolph Churchill's Paddington Address, is an example—will be found to contain an incredible invective, but he never repaid any of his assailants in their own coin, he had a mint of his own which made theirs seem trivial and foolish. He could blaze with anger but he scarcely ever lost his temper. He was a master of raillery, but it was almost always jolly and good-humoured.

Had he a sense of humour ? I have often heard it debated and cannot imagine any other answer than that he had a peculiarly whimsical and individual kind of humour. There was indeed a large territory, especially religion and sex, on which he was resolutely irresponsible to any kind of cynicism or levity, and those who approached him on this ground came away convinced that his solemnity was impenetrable. A sense of fun he had and wit. No man knew better, when it suited his purpose, how to keep up a running current of laughter as accompaniment to a debating speech. Isolated sentences of wit and humour are apt to lose their savour when taken from their context, yet if you will forgive me I will risk a few. At a dinner-party at which I was a humble listener a guest asked him how it was possible for Mr. Pitt to address the House of Commons after drinking two bottles of port. He appeared to be reflecting deeply on the problem, then suddenly came the answer : “ You must remember,” he said, “ that he was addressing an assembly, very few members of which had consumed less.” Then how witty in the best sense of the word is his observation that in his encounter with Disraeli, Peel suffered from “ a certain righteous dullness.” How admirable again is his comparison of himself in his relations with Queen Victoria to the Sicilian mule who served him so well and bore him so patiently but whom, try as he did, he found it impossible to like. Or to take an example of the

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little things that amused him, and they were many, Asquith used to tell a story of how, seeing him absorbed in contemplation of the benches opposite, he asked him what he was thinking about. "I was wondering," he said, indicating two members, "whether X or Y is the ugliest man in the House of Commons." Asquith said, "Surely X." "No," said Mr. Gladstone, "you are quite wrong, and I will tell you why. If you were to magnify X he would be almost noble, but if you magnified Y he would be uglier than ever."

### IV

So far I have collected only a few scattered points to revive a memory which is extremely vivid in my own mind, but very difficult to pass on. There remains the question—what did Gladstone stand for, nay, more, what does he stand for now?

With Lord Morley's great biography available to everybody it may seem rash to plunge in again on this question. Yet, great men, like great books, acquire new meaning with the passage of time, and it is impossible to think of Gladstone without relating him to these times. What would we not give if that great and powerful voice testifying for Liberalism and liberty were still sounding through the world to-day?

British politics gained immensely in former times by the projection of great issues in the form of duels between the leading figures on the Parliamentary stage. From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards there was a succession of these encounters. First it was Palmerston and John Bright, the one standing for the combative qualities of the British people, the other for its humanitarian and peace-loving instincts; then it was Disraeli and Gladstone, the one standing for power, authority and

prestige, the other for law, duty and conscience. Through their encounters political principles received a sort of incarnation, and their followers ranged themselves behind the protagonists, as behind Ormuzd and Ahriman, powers of light and darkness. Thunder rolled and lightning flashed as the heroes joined battle ; both sides appealed to the high gods, whose names were sometimes taken in vain, but between them the onlooker got the impression that political principles were things of tremendous importance with active and living influence not only on nations and national policy, but on the daily life of men and women.

It was, I think, Gladstone's greatest service that he gave Liberalism this standing, not only in this country, but in the world. If we look at the great speeches of his Midlothian campaign we shall find in them the germ of almost everything that is in our minds to-day. He stands for the international order which he calls the "Concert of Europe" ; he protests against the toleration of massacre and savagery by the civilised Powers, predicts the catastrophe which must follow if the Governments insist on treating the moral order as if it were of no account. He was not, on the short-term judgment of policy, a skilful politician ; his generous enthusiasm often led him astray on the devious road of practical politics, but will anyone say that he was wrong on the great issues ? Viewed in the light of after events, will anyone say that it would not have been immensely to the advantage of the great European Empires if they had heeded his advice and applied themselves in time to the peaceful settlement of the problems presented by the Turkish Empire in Europe, instead of waiting until its weakness and corruption involved most of them in its ruin ?

And then when we come to the chief subject in domestic policy which occupied his closing years there must be very

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few to-day who do not regret that the country left unheeded his warning that the sands were running out on the question of Ireland. "Think, I beseech you, think well, think wisely, think not for the moment but for the years to come, before you reject this Bill." Do not these words sound prophetic to-day? But, after all, there was something more in Mr. Gladstone than the measures he proposed; there was his extraordinary personality, radiating influence far beyond the circle of one political party or even one country. He has been called the greatest public man of modern times and the description is just. You may remember Dr. Johnson's description of the great Lord Chatham. "He was not," said Johnson, like Walpole, "a Minister given by the King to the people; but a Minister given to the King by the people." He was "carried," said Gibbon, "upon the shoulders of the people." Could there be better descriptions of Mr. Gladstone? His publicity was immense but he never sought it; the newspapers went after him, not he after them. They reported verbatim every word that fell from his lips, described the scenes at every railway station when he went campaigning, regarded the slightest facts about him as news—the number of times he chewed his food, the number of times he went to church, the shape of his collars and where he bought his hats. I do not think I exaggerate if I say that the newspapers watched over him with the same care and gave him almost the same honours in big type and splashing headline as some of them now give only to the more eminent film-stars, jockeys and prize-fighters. There were little plaster busts of him in thousands of humble cottages and a multitude flocked to Hawarden to gather up the chips from the trees that he felled.

What was the secret of it? I think the late Lord Salisbury came nearest to it when he described him just after his death as a great Christian statesman. He was a

loyal son of the Church of England, but his faith overflowed all boundaries—witness his great speeches in the Bradlaugh debates—and was always at the back of his politics. Somehow he managed to convey to the country and to the world that there was something called Liberalism, something of infinite value to the human spirit which was greater than any measure or any policy. This was the great light which led him to raise his voice in protest against any form of tyranny and oppression wherever practised. He saw them all as outrages against the being who was made in the image of God.

I have sometimes thought in recent years that we lose something of the power and warmth of this light when we pass it through a prism and project it on to a screen as a programme of reforms. The reforms are very necessary, but also it is necessary for us to pursue our practical politics without losing the integrity and wholeness of the Liberal idea. How few and feeble are the voices raised in Europe to-day for this essential Liberalism, how many and strident those which deride it as a decadent survival from a past age. Our left-wing politicians pay lip-service to liberty but cannot conceal their admiration for a system in which free speech, free writing and free combination are totally prohibited, or their hankering after a policy which could only be carried out by the sacrifice of liberty. Our right-wing seems more concerned to do battle with the left than to stand for ideas of its own ; and it has never felt as the old Liberals did about this essential thing that they called Liberalism. In all this there is danger that Liberalism may go by default, or that its advocacy may pass from us to the other side of the Atlantic.

I do not know what Mr. Gladstone would have done if he had been living at this hour. I feel convinced that he would somehow have made his voice heard through all the obstructions, and against all the clash of opposing voices and

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forces. And as a last word I would hazard a prediction. This is that the old Liberalism as Gladstone conceived it and expounded it will in the lifetime of many in this audience be once more the advanced thought of the rising generation, and that he will then resume his rank as one of the major prophets.

## CHAPTER II

JOHN MORLEY<sup>1</sup>

### I

FROM the time when I was seventeen years old the *Fortnightly Review* was my constant companion. A copy of it, bought second-hand for a few pence, was discovered in my bedroom by an orthodox relative with whom I was staying about the year 1880, and well I remember the scene that followed. Taking it in a pair of tongs and holding it high above his head, he marched downstairs and placed it at the back of the kitchen fire, with an awe-struck household looking on.

Morley was then nearing the end of the fifteen-year period in which he had edited it, and in the closed circle of the orthodox his name had become a symbol of the subversive ideas from which the rising generation needed most to be protected. "Our miscellany of writers," he says in his "Recollections," "was taken by prejudiced observers to disclose an almost sinister unity in spirit and complexion. This unity was, in fact, the spirit of Liberalism in its most many-sided sense." Certainly it was many-sided. On one side Huxley, Tyndall, and Herbert Spencer were developing the doctrines of evolution and evolutionary ethics; on another Morley himself did battle for Utilitarian doctrine (which he preferred to call the "Beneficential

<sup>1</sup> Published in the *Fortnightly Review* for December, 1938, the hundredth anniversary of his birth.

Theory of Ethics"), and then towards the end came Joseph Chamberlain and Charles Dilke with the opening moves of the new radicalism. The bill of fare may sound a little austere to a generation which has forgotten the zest with which these heroes waged their wars and the breathless interest with which their fortunes were watched by intelligent onlookers. Such mild interest as is evoked in these days by the new physical theories cannot for a moment be compared with the heat and dust thrown up by the protagonists in these battles of long ago. At last it seemed as if an irreparable breach had been made in the ancient ramparts, and the cry went up from Bishops and Archbishops and the great company which stood on the ancient ways in religion and politics that the host of Satan was at the gate. To them the *Fortnightly* was thought to be specially insidious because it covered the inner core of its subversive doctrine with an outer coating of high culture which was calculated to deceive even the elect. A review to which Swinburne, Matthew Arnold, Walter Bagehot, George Meredith, Frederic Harrison, Gabriel Rossetti, Leslie Stephen, Mark Pattison, and Walter Pater contributed could not escape notice even among the Conservative-minded. All these brilliant writers seemed to be in league with the editor to undermine "the system," as Meredith called it, the established order of Church, State, rank, fashion and commerce, which fifty years earlier Cobbett had called "it."

Morley was in the habit of speaking of himself as an "old journalist," but he was not really sealed of the tribe, as the old contemptibles of the trade would understand that phrase. It is doubtful whether he ever entered a newspaper office until he walked into the dingy little room in Northumberland Street from which the *Pall Mall Gazette* was edited. Certainly he never went through the mill of news-gathering or reporting, and as an editor he regarded himself as con-

cerned mainly with opinion which meant writing the daily leading article, (in those days displayed in large type on the front page of the penny evening papers) and selecting the principal contributors of the literary articles and book reviews. Of journalism in this sense his experience was confined to the four years in which he edited the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

In early days he was a literary free-lance doing any job which served to keep him alive in the lean years after a quarrel with his father had compelled him to leave Oxford prematurely and try to earn a living in London. Except for an occasional hint that these years were for him the "hungry twenties," he was curiously reticent about them in after life. The scanty records show that when hard pressed he seems to have taken pupils and even taught in a school. But from the beginning his eye was fixed on Parliament, and when in the year 1869, at the age of thirty-one, he fought a forlorn hope as a radical candidate in his home town of Blackburn, his course was definitely set. When asked as a child what he intended to be when he grew up, he is said to have replied "a great man," and by a "great man" he always meant a public man, a Parliament man, and no mere scribe.

This was the clue to the whole of his life. He had a great and obvious literary gift which enabled him to catch the eye of important people and ensured him a rapid rise after his early struggle. He would work indefatigably at any literary work which came his way so that he might gain his footing in what he believed to be the real world of the great. The safe income of £400 which came to him in these early years as a writer of "middle articles" in that organ of stern and unbending toryism, the *Saturday Review*, was grist to this mill. There is a pleasant touch of irony in the picture which he has painted of himself and the late Lord Salisbury—then Lord Robert Cecil—waiting together

in silence in the editor's ante-room, the one bringing the political provender desired by the editor, the other earning the modest income which was to help him on his way to be a Liberal statesman. They eyed one another but never spoke, and I seem to recall that Morley told me in after days that he never in his life had had a word with Lord Salisbury, greatly as by that time he had come to admire him. "Lord Salisbury and I," he said, somewhere about the year 1900, "are the only two believers in a Liberal foreign policy alive to-day."

For a young man with Morley's qualities and ambitions, it was great good fortune to have been appointed editor of the *Fortnightly Review* before he was twenty-nine. Mr. Francis Hirst has told the story of these years very fully in his "Early Life and Letters of John Morley," and it is an interesting chapter in nineteenth century literary history. In the first eighteen months of its existence the *Fortnightly* had come very near foundering and its proprietors had been obliged to abandon their original idea of fortnightly publication. But it testifies to the reputation which it had gained for itself in these few months that they thought it wise to retain the title when it had ceased to be descriptive. For the decision to retain it Trollope was responsible, and in after years he entered a whimsical defence of its "absurd misnomer."<sup>1</sup> It was to this tradition and valuable "connection" that Morley succeeded when Mr. Edward Chapman appointed him editor in 1866, and it brought him at once into the grand circle of Victorian Liberals and made him the conductor of their orchestra. With his indefatigable industry and seriousness he pro-

<sup>1</sup> Of all the serious "publications of the day it probably is the most serious, the most earnest, the least devoted to amusement, the least flippant, the least jocose—and yet it has the face to show itself month after month to the world with so absurd a misnomer."—Trollope, quoted by Hirst, I, page 64. Subsequently, Trollope's defence was that it was a very serious thing to change the name of a periodical, since that would be almost equivalent to starting a new enterprise.

ceeded to educate himself for a position for which till then he had only the sketchiest qualifications. Nineteenth century Liberalism traced back many of its leading ideas to the great Frenchmen of the eighteenth century—Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Turgot, Condorcet. He resolved to study them all, write articles or monographs about them, and give the same exhaustive study to the great Irish-Englishman, Burke, about whom it was still hotly debated whether he was rightly called Whig, Liberal or reactionary. These studies might give scope for literary gifts, but Morley's object was the intensely practical one of sorting out of the immense lumber-room of obsolete rubbish and living wisdom surviving from these times such things as had value for Englishmen living in his own day. They were in this respect the writings of a publicist, not of a literary man.

"Read them mercifully," he used to say in after days when one harked back to them, "remember the volume of the water which has flowed under the bridges since they were written." Nevertheless, when the necessary discount has been made, these books and the articles in the *Fortnightly* during the same period, hold a distinguished place in the literature of political edification. For all his objection to orthodox theology, Morley had a keen eye for doctrine, wherever it appeared, and his commentaries on the Liberal prophets have the fervour and unction of theological writing. But they earned him the reputation, which he never quite shook off, of being a doctrinaire in practical affairs. The large discursive generalisations which gave profundity to his writings, were not easily reduced to the scale of party politics. Criticism of the party system from the high altitude of general principles, and leading to conclusions dangerously like those of Bolingbroke's Patriot King, got him into serious difficulties on the eve of the 1868 election. He had predicted the death of

Liberalism at the hustings, and when the Liberal Party came back to power with a great majority he persisted in denouncing the new Parliament as a "Chamber of Mediocrities," the same old collection of "Colonels, squires, lawyers, railway directors, millionaires in search of social tone, striplings of great houses." This Parliament was, nevertheless, to go down to history as having brought "reform in a flood" under the guidance of Mr. Gladstone's greatest administration. To the end of his life Morley remained sadly conscious of the difficulty of squaring the ideal with the real, and to search out something that he had written in these early days and throw it at the head of the Secretary of State in after years became in time one of the recognized branches of political sport. There was much trouble of this kind about the year 1890, when the member for Newcastle had to reconcile his acceptance of eight hours for miners and other items in the new radical programme with what the editor of the *Fortnightly* had written about the limits of State interference in former years.

## II

In the eighties most young men who came from Oxford to London dreaming of a literary career brought a letter of introduction to Morley. I brought one from Max Muller and took it to Elm Park Gardens in January, 1886—an awkward moment, for he must have been up to the eyes in discussions behind the scenes of events leading up to his own entry into office as Irish Chief Secretary. He was kind, I recorded at the time, but scarcely encouraging. He said he would assume that I could write, but wanted to know what I could write about.<sup>1</sup> The question was

<sup>1</sup> He used to relate that another young man whom he had asked to say what he considered to be his strong suit had answered "Invective," and when pressed for particulars had said "general invective."

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disconcerting, and I floundered heavily. For an interminable period his only comment was "Ah" with a deep breath. Then he picked me up a little and said, of course, that was what I had to find out. After that he talked for a few minutes about style and journalism and the difficulty of "keeping head above ink in the murky tide," and earnestly advised me to go back and learn my business in the provinces, from which after six months of adversity in a provincial newspaper office, I had just come. He cited Stead whom he called the "most vivacious of the tribe," and said he had learnt his job in Darlington. It was not acceptable advice, but I took it and for the next five years was learning my job as editor of a daily newspaper at Hull.

I seem to remember that at this interview he struck a warning note against the idea which he discovered in some youthful minds that journalism was a good way of getting into Parliament and qualifying as a practical politician. He held strong views on this subject, and to the end of his life seemed to regard himself as the one exception to the rule which fixed an impassable boundary between the two activities. Long after, when I was writing the "Life of Campbell-Bannerman," a letter of his came into my hands in which he strongly protested against the suggestion which appears to have been made by some of his colleagues that a certain journalist should be appointed to a high administrative or diplomatic position. He said among other things that the practice of journalism in the way in which this man was supposed to have practised it was bound to dull the faculties, and could leave nothing over as mental and intellectual capital on which to start a new career in middle life. In general his view was that the over-development of the critical faculty which political journalism encouraged was harmful to the cool and impartial judgment required of a Minister or high official.

Was Morley himself the exception to his own rule that he supposed himself to be? By all measurements he was a highly successful man. He enjoyed wide fame and had far-reaching and beneficent influence. He was one of those who, as he himself said of Mr. Gladstone, helped to "keep the soul alive in England." Yet at the end it was a little in doubt whether he would not be better remembered as the writer of the "Life of Gladstone" than as a public man. It is no reflection on him, but rather a tribute to his book that the question should be asked, yet he would undoubtedly have been vexed if he had supposed that there could be any doubt about the answer.

I was one of a little party at his dinner-table in the year 1898 when Joseph Chamberlain was his principal guest, and we sat till midnight while host and guest discussed the vanities and disappointments of the public life. Both said in their haste that they did not care a fig what posterity said about them; what they wanted was to achieve their ambitions here and now. Chamberlain was quite frank that he had wished to be Prime Minister, and he said that, having been baulked of that by the Home Rule split, he was aware that his career could only from that time on be a second-best, but, as a practical man, he was determined to make the best of the second-best. This, I think, was exactly what Morley found difficult. He had all the literary man's sense of the greatness of the scene on which great affairs went forward, and saw the leading figures on it as men making history, men who might hereafter win the Homeric epithets which he himself awarded so abundantly to his literary heroes. The Irish question on which he made his greatest contribution to public affairs appealed to him first of all as history. He had made a careful study of it in his early days, and he saw it as drama or tragedy in a spacious historical setting with a pre-destined part laid down for the modern Liberal Party.

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Gladstone, who had the same habit of mind, found in Morley just the congenial spirit he needed when he started on the Irish crusade in January, 1886. Only those whose memory goes back to this time can realize what it meant to the older man to have at his side this ardent auxiliary, full to the brim of the subject and ready to share the enormous risk which he was taking.

I heard several of Morley's speeches on the Irish question during the next few years and remember them still as among the best platform speeches I ever listened to. They were oratorical exercises in the grand style which read the next day nearly as well as they sounded when delivered. Admirers spoke of Burke and Fox having come to life again, and not without reason. Their merit lay in a certain embroidered simplicity. They abounded in the common-places which delight big audiences, but placed them in a literary setting which gave pleasure to the most fastidious. Morley was most in his element when expounding his theme in a broad and general way, and least at home when explaining the details of an Irish Home Rule Bill to the House of Commons. Indeed, the details of the old Home Rule Bills were exasperating. Let alone the complications of finance, it passed the wit of man, in Mr. Gladstone's phrase, to satisfy those who wanted the Irish to remain in the Imperial Parliament and those who wanted them kept out. Morley was often in despair at the irrationality of critics who wanted things to be and not to be at the same time, but skilful as he was as a literary dialectician, he was without the peculiar skill which is needed to meet a sudden call to reconcile opposites in the heat of debate.

### III

This is the handicap which with rare exceptions is carried by men entering Parliament in middle life, especially

literary men accustomed to debate with their pens rather than with their tongues. When it came to the impromptu give and take of debate Morley suffered from an embarrassment which got him marked early in the day as not a "House of Commons man." The judgment is compatible with great respect and admiration, but it bars the road to the leadership of a party and the eventual succession to the Prime Ministership. In all the discussions about the leadership of the Liberal Party after Mr. Gladstone's retirement, one never heard Morley's name mentioned. He was recognized as a most distinguished ornament of the party and it was agreed that everything in the world should be done to give him pleasure and show him respect, but the dyed-in-the-wool Parliamentarians were clear that he was not one of them and that he would not do to lead them. This depressed his spirits and to a certain extent embittered him. He saw men who were his juniors and had none of his reputation outside Parliament come up and pass him in the race for the highest place, and, perhaps even more galling, he saw it taken for granted that this must be so. The literary man, the late-comer into Parliament should go thus far and no farther. This, I think, it what chiefly weighed with him, when to Asquith's great astonishment in 1908 he announced his decision to quit the Commons for the Lords.

The chapters in his "Recollections" in which he describes his intimate friendship for twelve years with Joseph Chamberlain tells a large part of this story. It was a union of opposites, in which each supplied the other with the qualities which he was conscious of not possessing himself. There is something very engaging in the picture which Morley draws of himself listening earnestly to the projects and arguments of the practical man, admiring his acute mind and concentration on the things of the day but finding him a little lacking in general ideas, and dangerously rash when he

plunged into the deep waters of Rousseauism and the rights of man. If these two could have been rolled into one, Chamberlain with his eye for detail and debating accomplishments, Morley with his discursive mind and literary gifts, what an incomparable statesman they would have made !

## IV

Another unfulfilled wish of Morley's was to be Foreign Secretary. Rosebery would not give it him in 1894, and Campbell-Bannerman was deaf to all hints that he would like it in 1905. Here he came up against another of the rooted traditions of the "system." A man who had proclaimed himself a "little-Englisher" and "anti-Imperialist" might be Prime Minister or Chancellor of the Exchequer, but he could not in reason expect to be Foreign Secretary. There was a silent agreement on this point in the official and diplomatic world, and it amounted in practice to a veto which all Prime Ministers respected. Yet we may think with regret of the dispatches which Morley would have written if he had held this office. His style was exactly suited to the great occasions in international affairs. As a matter of fact, though he stoutly maintained that he was an "anti-Imperialist" and in 1914 his old preference for non-intervention reasserted itself, there was little trace of the "little-Englisher" in the intervening years. As Secretary of State for India he had a high sense of the majesty and dignity of the British Raj, and drew very firmly the line beyond which disorder could not be tolerated or rash experiments in democracy be permitted. In these years he played an active part in overcoming the objections of the Government of India to the British-Russian agreement of 1906, and for that earned the warm acknowledgments of Campbell-Bannerman and Grey. He was never happier

than when acting as deputy Foreign Secretary, when Grey was taking holiday, or in attending and even presiding over the Committee of Imperial Defence. On these occasions he would discuss the strategic problems which arose on the Indian frontier, or lay ahead in Europe, with the greatest zest, and without showing the slightest trace of any doctrinaire or non-intervention views. He would advise the soldiers about their own job without any hesitation, and often with great shrewdness. "Sharp sallies and quick return to the base" was the advice he offered to soldiers dealing with trouble on the North-west frontier.

Morley in these days was one of a little group of personally charming men—Balfour, Asquith, Rosebery, Birrell, Grey, Crewe, Haldane were others—who gave sweetness and light to the inner circle of politics. To be in the company of any three or four of these was to listen to the best talk on all subjects; between them they covered a wide field of literature, history and philosophy. Morley was delightful in this setting; his voice was fascinating; his manners exquisitely polite, indeed, in argument he often yielded so much to an opponent that he never could recover the lost ground. Whether he, Asquith or Rosebery had the better memory for things done or written in the past was never quite certain. They would chase one another through the centuries till they got back to Plato and Aristotle when Asquith disputed the lead with Morley. Sometimes the formidable Lord Acton looked on, waiting to pounce, if any of them gave an opening, which they very seldom did. Morley on these occasions showed a gaiety and lightness of touch which he seemed deliberately to exclude from his writings. He was in that respect of the old school which regarded the literary language as a thing to be guarded against the intrusions of everyday speech. Someone said of his "Life of Gladstone" that he seemed to put on the uniform of a Privy Councillor whenever he sat down to

write it. It was part of his philosophy that, when it came to writing, the great man or the great theme deserved the grand style, and he very deliberately tuned himself up to it. To have kept the pitch through three big volumes was a very remarkable feat, and though other sides of Mr. Gladstone remained for others to explore, it is difficult to find an equal example of high sculpturesque biography carried through consistently on the same design. The ill-natured said it was a mausoleum for Mr. Gladstone, but many thousands visited it and revisited it with awe and admiration.

The literary temperament which Morley brought into politics was always a puzzle to the practical politicians. Undoubtedly he was, by their standards, *difficile*. He greatly disliked having his dispatches pulled about by men who had no sense of style ; it often needed long argument to persuade him to concede small points which the practical man would have decided in five minutes. He told me when he became Secretary of State for India, as he did when the Curzon-Brodick-Kitchener quarrel was still simmering, that the first thing he had done was to issue a warning to all and sundry that if any of them threatened to resign, his resignation would instantly be accepted. Yet within a few weeks he himself was telling the Prime Minister that if he did not get his way on some relatively unimportant point there would be a “vacant stool in Whitehall.” The threat of the “vacant stool” was a constant worry to Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith, and it had serious and (I believe) unintended consequences in 1910. I was the humble means of building a bridge on that occasion, but Asquith told me that he had had at least twenty letters of resignation from Morley before he accepted that one.

Yet in spite of, and perhaps even because of, these little frailties, he is held in affectionate memory by those who were associated with him in these years. It was a pleasure to do him any small service. “Pray come quickly and

bring me fodder" was a call I often received in the ten years between 1895 and 1905, "fodder" being material for forthcoming public speeches on the subjects of those years, Fashoda, Kiao-Chow, South Africa, the education question, the fiscal question. How gladly one went for the sake of an hour in his company, and how admirably the "fodder" was transformed into the feasts with which his audiences were regaled. Sometimes an article I had written threw me out of favour for some weeks or months, but he was never so charming as in his ways of ending these little tiffs, and when I was bidden again to the "Viscounts' lunch"—himself, Esher and Knollys—I knew that peace was restored. There was a time after the last war when all communications seemed to be broken. He wrote to me abruptly to say that he would see none of us "while hell blazed." Then one day in the year 1916 I got a note from him to say that he was sending me a "paper-weight" for my writing table. The "paper-weight" turned out to be the Seals of the Secretary of State for India, which had become his property on the death of King Edward. As possessor of the Seals, I felt in a privileged position to visit him in his last years, and I recall with gratitude the many happy hours I spent with him in the great room in his house at Wimbledon, where he wrote at leisure and browsed among the ten thousand best books from the Acton library, which had now come into his possession.

## CHAPTER III

### ADDENDA TO BIOGRAPHY

#### I

#### HALDANE

CERTAIN recently published biographies of men I have known tempt me to add a little to what I have written about them at other times. First comes Sir Frederick Maurice's second volume of his life of the late Lord Haldane.

This, as was to be expected, is full of good military stuff going to prove once again how much a man of first-class brain may do in a department of which, when he comes to it, he is wholly ignorant. No expert military man could have done what Haldane did at the War Office between 1906-1911. It would be difficult to find a better vindication than can be found in these pages of the queer British habit, as it seems to the undemocratic and unwise, of fitting square pegs into round holes in the formation of a Cabinet. When Haldane visited Berlin in 1907 and was condescendingly received by the great military experts, the German Emperor is said to have expressed himself freely about the *naïvete* of the English who set a barrister on top of their Generals. Possibly he thought a little differently when the "old contemptibles," who were the barrister's special creation, appeared at the battle of the Marne.

But Haldane remains most in memory as one of the

classic examples of public ingratitude, set in a niche beside Aristides and Themistocles. How was it that one of the great English parties actually made it a condition of joining a Government at a critical moment in the last war that the man who had done this immense service, the man whom Haig afterwards described as "the greatest War Secretary England ever had" should be excluded from it? "Ignorance, madam, ignorance," as Dr. Johnson said, is the most charitable explanation, for it is really puerile to suppose that reasonably educated men, including Lord Balfour, seriously thought it to be a reflection on him that in paying a tribute to his old tutor Lotze, he had said that "Germany was his spiritual home." An ignorant demagogue might pick up this phrase and pelt him with it before an illiterate audience—it was the sort of thing that Bottomley would do—but it was scarcely to be expected of high-minded educated gentlemen. Nothing but ignorance could excuse them, and, since they had been in Opposition during the four years of Haldane's activities at the War Office it is not quite so surprising an explanation as it might seem. In those days the men in Opposition knew little of what the men in office were doing in their departments.

It is reassuring to learn that all those who knew the facts, the King, the generals, the politicians, the civil servants, stood loyally by Haldane behind the scenes, but again we have to appeal to the atmosphere of war to explain why they failed to vindicate him in the public eye. It was, I think, partly due to his own singular incapacity for defending himself or even explaining what was at issue between him and his assailants. This master of clear thinking had an extremely nebulous way of speaking and writing. All his own explanations seemed to make things worse. It was only when a few competent journalists—especially Harold Begbie—got to work on the facts that the public began to understand them.

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A large part of Sir Frederick Maurice's second volume is devoted to Haldane's rather strange wind-up of his career as an adherent of the Labour party and Lord Chancellor in a Labour Government. Once more the story becomes a running comment on the oddity of British institutions. The innocent foreigner might well imagine that the other parties and especially the Conservative party would have been aghast at the success of Labour in landing so big a fish out of their own pool. Quite the contrary. All the other parties are greatly pleased and reassured. Mr. Baldwin entirely approves, King George is greatly relieved, prices rise, the city heaves a sigh of relief. Asquith alone has legitimate doubts whether his old friend will be comfortable in his new quarters ; all the others, and especially his brother-peers, beg him to go in and "help the country" in what they plainly consider to be a serious emergency.

The incident will no doubt be quoted by Communists as another example of how British Capitalists smother the class-war, just when it is about to break out. They smuggle one of their own class into the Socialist camp and he sees to it that the fire is kept under. But this also would be quite wrong. There was no class-war in 1924 ; neither the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, nor any of his colleagues were dreaming of it. They were thinking only of how the King's Government could be carried on in somewhat difficult circumstances ; Haldane was willing to help, everybody agreed that he ought to help. That was all there was in it. The disappointing part of it was that he could help so little. Sir Frederick is very discreet about this part of his narrative, but he enables us to infer that it was hard going much of the way. What most of us expected Haldane to impress on his Labour colleagues at this time was that it was folly for them to take office in dependence on Liberal votes unless they were prepared for civil working relations with the Liberal party in the House of Commons.

This, one would have supposed, was the A B C of the "clear thinking" which was his constant exhortation. But neither he nor they were able to see it and, in default of any clear understanding between the two parties, the Labour Government stumbled into a morass of difficulties, some of which, like the Campbell prosecution, must have been specially disagreeable to its Lord Chancellor. The truth was that the detachment from the Liberal party upon which he had by this time come to pride himself prevented him from doing precisely the service which would have been most useful to his new friends.

But Haldane was never a good politician, and Sir Frederick helps us to understand why. He thought of government in departments—Army, Navy, Education, Law, Public Health, etc.—and supposed that if each department was perfectly organized they would add up into a perfectly efficient Government. This general idea led by a logic of its own toward Socialism—the Socialism of Mr. Sidney Webb, with whom from the beginning Haldane was on intimate terms. The trouble was that the sum never worked out right; it was always being defeated by some unforeseen political development. But Haldane remained indefatigable through all these vicissitudes and all changes of Government, and his great contribution was to the departments of the public life. An astonishingly varied contribution it was, covering almost every branch of administration from the War Office to the Woolsack. Sir Frederick's claim that he "did things" and has left his mark on a dozen different departments, and above all on Education, is well justified.

All through these years he was busily at work on philosophy and produced a crop of books which in bulk would have done credit to any whole-time professional philosopher. It is tempting to follow him on this ground, but the subject is spacious and space is limited. One chuckles a little at

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a certain scene which Sir Frederick brings before us. Haldane, though innocent of mathematics, was bent on proving that Einstein's theory of relativity was in line with religion and philosophy, especially his own Hegelian ideas about the relativity of knowledge. To that intent he brought a company of metaphysicians and divines to meet Einstein at his table. Among them was Archbishop Davidson who, having imperfectly rehearsed his part, asked too bluntly whether Einstein thought that his theory had any reference to religion. To which the answer was "none whatever."

## II

### RAMSAY MACDONALD

The next book is Lord Elton's "Life of Ramsay MacDonald," a friendly biography of one of the great *hommes incompris* of British politics. He has been so bitterly assailed by the men from whom he parted in 1931 that a little more than strict justice is needed to balance his account.

I knew him to any purpose only in the last ten years of his life in the course of which I had many friendly talks and occasional correspondence with him. But I had watched him at work for many years previously and had come to think of him as perpetually trying to explain himself to himself and to his party and never quite succeeding. He was so much the ablest House of Commons man in the Labour party that they were bound to want him as leader; the trouble was that they were not the party that nature fitted him to lead. True, he had all the qualifications that a struggle upwards from humble beginnings could bring. He had lived on ten shillings a week and tramped the streets of London looking for any job which would keep

body and soul together. To that extent he was a Labour man. But he was born with a black coat on his back and could never have been any sort of manual worker. Indeed, he was through and through an intellectual, with all the stigmata of the tribe, its bookishness, its itch for writing, its scepticism of hasty generalizing, its discomfort when necessity drives it to use the language of the platform or the soap-box. These inhibitions were always an irritation to the unintellectual champions of Labour, and MacDonald increased it by the habit, which grew on him, of using mysterious language about things which were really quite simple. Like his brother Scot, Haldane, he seemed to have a peculiar difficulty in focussing his thoughts. There was thus an element of surprise in the sudden decisiveness of his action in 1931. His colleagues had not expected it of him, and thought it very unfair.

MacDonald's political ideas, as Lord Elton describes them, would have been best served by a fusion of the Labour group, as it emerged after the 1906 election, with the more advanced Liberals and Radicals. His Socialism was of the Ruskin-William Morris type and, as events showed, there was nothing to prevent its being grafted on to a Liberal stem. Being a good Parliament man, he was a firm believer in the "inevitability of gradualness" and thought Marxist ideas of revolution and class-war to be fatal to Parliamentary democracy. Yet his position required him to consent to the separateness of Labour and its total dedication to one class on which Keir Hardie and the advanced guard insisted—a condition which was to prevent it from ever obtaining a Parliamentary majority and to land him again and again in a politically impossible position.

Whenever the curtain is lifted, MacDonald is seen working for civil relations and as much co-operation as possible with the Liberal party. Yet by a queer irony he himself became

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one of the chief obstacles to this co-operation. Being suspect as an intellectual with "bourgeois" leanings, he was the more concerned to emphasize his orthodoxy as a Socialist. Had he seemed to give his countenance to what three-fourths of his followers considered to be the Liberal-Labour heresy, they would certainly have found another leader. Nevertheless, he and they ought to have perceived that they were placing themselves in an impossible position when (as happened in 1924) they accepted office in dependence on Liberal support, and yet declined the necessary co-operation with Liberal leaders and whips. When MacDonald brought his Government to its confused climax in the autumn of that year, he seemed like a man divided against himself and reduced to an angry exasperation at a situation which he was powerless to control.

It is one of the conditions which the British people seem to exact from a leader who seeks their confidence—at all events, on the radical or Socialist side—that he should have fought them to the uttermost in one of their angry moods. Gladstone, Campbell-Bannerman, Lloyd George, and, eventually, MacDonald, all passed this test, and all won merit by it. MacDonald's ordeal was, perhaps, the hardest of all. For the four and a half years of the war he was probably the most unpopular man in the country, and it was entirely to his credit that he held on without flinching and, even on considerable provocation, did not retaliate in any manner damaging to the interests of the country in war.

Lord Elton has no difficulty in proving that MacDonald's opinions were sincere and his motives patriotic. But I own I find his account of these opinions somewhat nebulous. It is undoubtedly possible to be at one and the same time both a pacifist and a patriot, but the most ardent desire for the right kind of peace could hardly have justified MacDonald's anti-Government attitude while the issue was in doubt. There was more in it than that, more, perhaps,

than MacDonald himself was capable of expressing coherently in the turmoil of that time. Here, as throughout, we see the mystic at issue with the practical man, the mystic who hated war, with the practical man who realized that defeat would be an immeasurable calamity.

But the strangest of all the results of his action during the war was that it made his political fortunes. The left wing, which had hitherto been critical or hostile, now found reason to support him, and by so doing ensured his election as leader of the party in 1922. Nine years later they repented of their choice, but by this time they had decided that he should be Prime Minister not only in a Labour Government but in a National and predominantly Conservative Government.

Lord Elton strives courageously to prove that MacDonald's opinions were unchanged in these vicissitudes; what he does successfully prove is that his character remained the same from first to last. That was a compound of sense and sensibility in which, when the two conflicted, sense generally prevailed. His emotions were quite genuine, and equally genuine was his dislike of the theories and abstractions in which the Labour Party revelled. It would be absurd to use the word failure about the career which brought him from the humble beginnings of his Scottish home to the highest position in the country and made him for four years the leader of a powerful three-party combination. No man could have done what he did who was not a man of the highest ability. Yet in watching him, and still more in talking to him, one sometimes felt a doubt whether he had really found himself. I got the impression from 1924 onwards that his interest was predominantly in foreign affairs. Had he come up via Eton or Oxford he would probably have been marked from the beginning as a future Foreign Secretary and have been remembered chiefly in that capacity. The great game as played in the

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European arena had an extraordinary fascination for him, and it was, I think, the lure of it which more than anything else drew him away from his old friends. He was, for one thing, of far too critical a mind to share the illusions about Russia which were the acid test of foreign policy for so many of them in these years.

### III

#### LLOYD GEORGE

A third book I have made a note of is Mr. Watkin Davies's study of the pre-war Lloyd George ("Lloyd George, 1863-1914," by W. Watkin Davies). This is the Lloyd George I knew best and there is a certain pleasure in looking back over the storms and agitations of the subsequent period to the different sort of warfare which he waged in those years and in which I myself played a modest part.

To the mass of writing about this extraordinary man Mr. Watkin Davies adds something new and explanatory in the stress which he lays on the Welsh side of his character. This is the clue to a great deal.

Many years ago, after a conversation with him, I recorded that, while I was speaking to him in English, he seemed to be thinking to himself in Welsh, and that I had great difficulty in finding the point of contact between what he was thinking and what I was trying to say. This, I still think, was a large part of the trouble that followed. His ideas of politics were impressionist, opportunist, dramatic, even histrionic, whereas English Liberals argued everything in terms of creed and principle. To them it seemed almost impossible at times to make sense of his variegated and seemingly inconsistent qualities, his impetuosity and his coolness, his violent platform manners, his skill and politeness in private, his merciless attacks on opponents, his confidence in his capacity

to dissolve their opposition by persuasive talk, if he could sit round a table with them out of reach of reporters. These habits of mind led him at times into great difficulties, but there is no doubt about the services that he rendered to the Liberal Party between 1906 and 1914. He and Asquith seemed to be exactly the kind of combination the times needed—Asquith keeping the compass true, Lloyd George imparting “drive” and bringing new ideas. The failure of this combination was one of the great disappointments of Party politics in the subsequent years.

The central incident of these years was, of course, the Budget of 1909, which made Mr. Lloyd George's political fortune and wrecked the ancient House of Lords. It is difficult to believe, but the total amount raised in new taxation under this Budget was £14,000,000—exactly the sum which in the spacious post-War days a Conservative Chancellor gave away at one stroke in order to take a penny off the price of a glass of beer. For this the ancient House of Lords committed suicide and the country was plunged into a controversy fiercer than any that the oldest had witnessed up to that time.

It was a wise Budget and, if the money had to be found, as all parties were agreed that it had to be, if only for the increase of the fleet, a financially orthodox Budget. Had it been presented in the cool and businesslike way in which Asquith explained it to an audience of business men in the Cannon Street Rooms, it would almost certainly have gone through with little more than the usual recrimination. But presented by Mr. Lloyd George from a platform in Limehouse, it took on the appearance of a declaration of war against the rich and prosperous.<sup>1</sup> All the wrath that Mr.

<sup>1</sup> King Edward's Secretary, Lord Knollys, once wrote to Asquith, who was always ready to defend a colleague against royal animadversions, begging him not to pretend to the King that he liked Lloyd George's speeches. The King did not believe it, and it only irritated him. Limehouse was Billingsgate, and there was no more to say about it.

Joseph Chamberlain had raised among the rich and powerful by his "unauthorised" speeches in 1885, Mr. Lloyd George raised by his Limehouse speeches in 1909. The "dukes," whom he delighted in baiting, blundered into the fray and retired bruised and beaten by his merciless tongue and withering sarcasm.

An old Cornish clergyman told me that one Sunday evening when his congregation had trooped out of church on the report that a ship was in distress, he followed them to the cliff-top and heard one of the most respected members of his flock say to another, "I'm almost afeared she ain't going ashore after all." This, I am afraid it must be said, was the sentiment of a great many stout Liberals and Radicals when it was rumoured in the autumn of 1909 that the quarrel was going to be settled. The failure to settle it was the greatest piece of party-political folly in our time. How did it come about? The short answer is, Lloyd George. I have understood it better in later days, when I have listened to his oratory from another angle, and felt its subtle invitation to unwise retorts. At the time one saw only the stampede down the steep place of all the Tory leaders, including Balfour, who was supposed to be the most skilful Parliamentary strategist then living. The "little Welshman" had beaten them all at what was then thought to be supremely their own game.

But within a year another side of his versatile character began to appear. In May, 1910, King Edward died, and Asquith proposed a Conference of party leaders to see if they could not settle between them some of the questions which, if unsettled, threatened danger and trouble to the new sovereign. Lloyd George's thoughts went far beyond this. Why not a Coalition in which lions and lambs would lie down together, and Limehouse be forgotten in a patriotic reconciliation with Mayfair? After all, were the things they differed about so very important when they got away

from the platform? The lion of Limehouse had now become the dove of peace, and for some weeks in the autumn was exploring all the avenues, as they used to say in those days, in intimate conversations with Balfour and F. E. Smith. The plan miscarried; as soon as it was whispered, partisans on both sides asked anxiously what in the world the public would think of them if they presented themselves in a Coalition in which, e.g., Liberals were supposed to have bought Home Rule and Welsh Disestablishment by accepting Tariff Reform and Compulsory Military Service, or Unionists to have sold Ireland and the Welsh Church for Liberal concessions? Would it not destroy all faith in the seriousness of politics?

Nothing was quite the same after the autumn of 1910. But Mr. Watkin Davies, I think, gives a wrong impression of the politics of the subsequent three or four years. In any summarised history of these years the Irish and House of Lords questions may seem to have swamped everything else. But it was actually a period of intense Liberal and Radical activity, the period of the initiation of Sickness and Unemployment Insurance, of preparation for a new campaign on Land Reform and other social questions which would have gone forward, if the War had not followed. Lloyd George was indefatigable in all these matters, and, having sat with him on the Committee which was preparing the Land campaign, I know how painstaking and thorough he could be in any business to which he had seriously set his hand. Incidentally, it is a mistake to suppose that he had any serious difficulty with his colleagues at this time. Grey, whose supposed indolence and incapacity he seems only to have discovered in later years, was among his warmest supporters. It was about this time that his friend, Lord Riddell, reported him as having said that Grey was the only man except Asquith under whom he would be content to serve.

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To forget the post-War Lloyd George in writing about the pre-War Lloyd George is not easy, for, as Oliver Wendell Holmes used to say, there are some things which blot backwards in the book of life. It is worth trying, however, and Mr. Watkin Davies's book is an honest attempt to do justice.



PART III  
IVORY TOWERS



## CHAPTER I

### A PROFESSOR ON HOLIDAY

#### I

PROFESSOR IRWIN EDNAM, the distinguished Professor of Philosophy in Columbia University, New York, has written a charming book ("Philosopher's Holiday") in which he describes how he has travelled in Europe and the Near East, and stopped in many places to scrape acquaintance with the philosophically minded, including inn-keepers and landladies. It is most engagingly written and its English readers will find themselves swimming in a stream of pleasantly coloured words, which make philosophy seem at once mystical and practical. Only an American brought up on Santayana and William James can do precisely this thing.

Professor Ednam winds up his book with a chapter entitled, "The Bomb and the Ivory Tower." The "Ivory Tower" has long been a metaphorical expression for dream-land—the place of escape in which we may pursue philosophy and culture and build our Utopias regardless of the bombs that may be falling, or other uncomfortable things that may be happening outside. The expression was first used, the Professor has discovered, by St. Beuve in his comment on Alfred de Musset's æsthetic isolation. Anyhow, it is a good phrase which has passed into the language. There is another simile, not so easily compressed into a few words,

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which equally fits the case. There is, we are told, in the heart of every cyclone a zone of peace. The winds rage round it, but do not enter it. The ship which finds itself there is for the moment in perfect peace.

The ivory towers or zones of peace differ in the security which they offer. The American can live in his tower and be sure (for the present) that the bombs falling around it are only metaphorical. He can criticise with a friendly detachment the behaviour of British and others who have to deal with the other kind. He may even, like some impatient American journalists, comment on our lack of spirit when the war seems to be flagging, as who should say, "these cocks won't fight." He never hears the "Sirens"; he doesn't need a gas-mask and is not required to rig up any of the rooms in his house as an A.R.P. shelter. Professor Ednam is on the whole very nice to us, but his point of vantage gives him a clear-sighted view of our infirmities, our mental indolence, our habit of supposing that things will come right of themselves, if left alone, the blind eye that our rich and comfortable classes are supposed to turn to the evils of poverty and the sufferings of the distressed areas,<sup>1</sup> and many other things that from the time of Matthew Arnold onwards our own philosophers and critics have used as sticks to beat us withal. All this is good for our souls, and if Americans, looking at the present state of Europe, decide to keep out of "bombs" in the material sense of that word, we, at all events, have no right to criticise. It is precisely what, for the greater

<sup>1</sup> Like so many other Americans visiting England, Professor Ednam appears to have taken some of his opinions from Socialist newspapers and economists. These have not told him that in spite of their supposed indifference to poverty, the English people, under mainly middle-class leadership, have evolved the best system of sickness and unemployment insurance and old age pensions in the world, and that the comfortable classes have borne cheerfully the taxation necessary for this purpose. It is possible that the U.S.A. may have something to learn from our conduct in this matter.

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part of the last century, we did ourselves and would no doubt have continued to do, if it had not been brought home to us that our Channel was not the complete security we had thought it to be against the various kinds of bombs which from that time onwards began to threaten us from Europe. It will be for Americans to decide, as the European affair develops, whether the Atlantic Ocean will continue to serve that purpose for them.

But for the moment we may leave the American in possession of his ivory tower and profit by his impartial survey of our qualities and infirmities. Probably he is right about the danger of some of these, such as our appearance of taking things easy and our inrooted habit of meiosis, as scholars call it, that is of undervaluing ourselves and seeming to take nothing too seriously. If in days to come, the reports which Ribbentrop sent to Hitler on the strength of his short pilgrimage among the rich and well-to-do of London society see the light, they will almost certainly be found to contain a large part of what the American Professor packs into his chapter about the Englishman, and they may have led to the conclusion that the Englishman wouldn't fight. And if the American came again now and listened to our wireless, with its sports bulletins, or observed our continuing demand for theatres and cinemas, and our complaints that the Government is making life too hard and too dull, he would probably conclude that we were quite incurable.

#### II

Possibly we have made a mistake in letting these impressions of us go abroad, for it is doubtful if we really differ much from other people in these respects. I remember as a child the four days between a death and a funeral—the death of some elderly relative, grandfather or grand-

mother, uncle or aunt—in which we were told it was wrong to laugh. We went to our nursery and tried to feel solemn, but, as Dr. Johnson's friend said, cheerfulness would break in, and presently sounds were heard which brought the complaint from down-stairs that the children were "so heartless." It was our ivory tower in a world of mutes. I have no more abiding memory of the last war than that of the unceasing chaffing and joking which went on among the Tommies in shell-torn trenches, and the gay persiflage of the French in the hell of Verdun. It was just this gaiety which kept them standing upright in a crashing world. Though it astonishes most people to say so, one element of war is boredom. Twice in the last war I visited a sector of the line in France in which for three out of the four and a half years nothing happened. True that in the remaining eighteen months the happenings were awful, and then no doubt those who took part in them decided, as the Prime Minister said the other day, that it was better to be bored than bombed. But there was no doubt at all that for the remaining three years those who remained on this part of the line were bored to extinction, so bored that to be moved to a more active front where death and wounds were the diversions was their constant demand. Anything better than sitting still and waiting for something to happen.

I have seen it seriously propounded as a theory of history, like Marxism or Spenglerism, that the real cause of the decline and fall of nations is boredom. In so far as they grow rich and prosperous and find no more worlds to conquer they become bored and get up civil wars and revolutions as diversions, and so go to pieces. This seems to me as good a theory as any other, and for myself, I have little doubt that if the "classless" society ever came about, the next turn of the wheel—what the Marxist would call the antithesis to its thesis—would be disruption through bore-

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dom. The perfect classless society is that of ants and bees, and it is difficult for intelligent human beings to think of anything more intolerably boring.

Everywhere in the totalitarian regimented world one sees the drift back to variety—the Russian Commissars and German bureaucrats aping the airs and graces of capitalist high society, prancing about in swell cars, dressing their women in Paris frocks, living in palaces. So far from objecting, the others seem to like it, and only demand that equalitarian names shall be given to the old things. As for these others—the proletarians, as they are insultingly called—their superiors are as convinced as ever that bread and circuses are what they want, and when bread fails circuses are multiplied. Festivals, processions, orations, military conquests—in one way or another the grand high pressure of bustle and excitement has to be kept up. When these diversions get to the point of satiety, little nations have to be butchered to make a German or Russian holiday. Non-stop variety is the demand; the great Entrepreneurs and Impresarios simply cannot afford to let their audiences be bored. Hitler's book is an essay on this theme by an expert Impresario. "Variety" is the word, as our own B.B.C. well knows. How to provide "variety" without war will be one of the master problems of a Europe at peace.

### III

Many of our earnest social reformers have missed this part of the truth. I have several times tried to induce boys from London slums to come and work in the country, and have nearly always failed. After about a fortnight they begin to wilt and at the end of three weeks demand to be sent back. Possibly "evacuation" may change this,

but in my experience a well-fed, comfortable life in the country offered them nothing to compare with the joys of the Old Kent Road, the free life of Bethnal Green and Whitechapel High Street. And, as they described it, it really was much more amusing than the life that I, for example, led as a child in a comfortable home. On another occasion I took some pains to get an old pensioner removed from a Bethnal Green slum to a comfortable lodging in the country. The moment he heard of it, he wrote to me protesting against the idea of moving him from the warmth and friendliness of his slum dwelling among his slum neighbours to the cold, solitary and nasty life of the country. So also another group of slum-dwellers whom I visited after they had been moved from one of the worst slums of a big city into a bright, airy and clean new block of flats erected in the suburbs by a progressive municipality. They nearly all wanted to go back and begged me, if I could, to get them back. They didn't want baths. They complained bitterly of the draughts in the model dwellings. The earnest reformer says it is deplorable that people should think in this way and that we must persevere until we get them out of thinking this way. No doubt, but he misses a large part of his problem, if he imagines that the slum-dwellers think about slums as he thinks, or are as miserable as he thinks they ought to be. About their life they have built up an exceedingly complicated system of mutual amusement and comfort which has somehow to be provided in any new life which he may prepare for them. Man does not live by bread alone nor by model dwellings and periodic sanitary inspection—still less woman.

There is nobody who isn't a bore to somebody and no kind of life which isn't boring to those who prefer another kind of life. At the worst of times and in the worst of conditions, the humblest of us builds his own kind of ivory tower where cheerfulness creeps in. For one it is the cinema,

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for another the concert hall, for a third the corner public-house, for a fourth the Bodleian or British Museum. A means of escape is necessary even from church and chapel. A successful American preacher gave me a cordial invitation to "inspect his amusement plant." Tolerating each other's ivory towers is one of the great tests of modern life. In music my mood shifts about between Bach, Beethoven and Mozart, Bach's Brandenburg Concertos, Beethoven's Fourth and Seventh Symphonies, Mozart's D Minor Violin Concerto; but my cook sits rapt under the new B.B.C. organ, an instrument which makes me understand why dogs howl at music. We each need our own receiving set. The one thing is not to pretend about it. The high-brow who pretends to like what he abhors, just to show, like Prince Andrey in "War and Peace," how "human" he is, deceives no one.

## IV

War itself is the greatest of all the diversions. We seem day by day to be looking on at a Roman arena enlarged to a world scale. Our near view of it is rather different from that of the American Professor who looks on from his ivory tower. Almost any one of us may be in the arena to-morrow and most of us feel that we ought to be, even if we are not. Yet those who engage in it must have their moments of rest and forgetfulness; even watching becomes intolerable without them. Nature is to this extent merciful; she seasons her tragedy with comedy and laughter. How dreadful, say the long-faced, that the announcer of battle and slaughter should wind up with a "sports bulletin"—grown men kicking footballs about, putting on greens, driving a little ball from hole to hole—while these awful things are happening. They are wrong. It is just their remoteness from the awful happenings which give

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them virtue for the millions who have no other ivory tower.

Aristotle said that the end of war was leisure and by-and-by, when this war is over, we may reconsider our respective ideas of the right use of leisure. Even then it is a vain thought that we shall agree about it. Till then we must live and let live and be charitable to the "variety" which suits other people's tastes.

## CHAPTER II

### ART AND THE AMATEUR

#### I

WHEN I was a boy I spent a great deal of time on learning to play scales, exercises, and certain simple pieces like Handel's sonatas, on the fiddle. I played duets with other boys and took part in a local orchestra. I do not at all regret the time spent in this way; it sharpened my ear and gave me a clue to orchestral music which I could not have got in any other way. But when I grew up I came to the conclusion that playing the fiddle could not be combined with any sort of busy life. Merely to play in tune and acquit yourself passably in what is called chamber music needed long and regular daily practice, which, if you were engaged for eight or ten hours a day in journalism, was quite out of the question. Parents who set their children to learn the violin should look ahead to this point. The same amount of time devoted to the piano may provide an accomplishment which will last through life; whereas you must either go a great deal farther with the violin or drop it altogether when you have other occupations.

But some diversion of this kind is imperative if you are to keep a clear brain in the ups and downs of life, and fortunately I had another string to my bow—to employ the appropriate simile. From the age of about fourteen I was accustomed to carry a little sketch-book in my pocket, and in this I made pencil sketches of anything that took my fancy, a view, a house, a boat, a tree, and on getting

home fixed them with a wash of sepia. From this I passed on to sketching in water-colours out of doors, and, when I went up to Oxford, I had a few dozen sketches of this kind in my possession. Ruskin was then in his second term of Slade Professor at Oxford, and a friend of his, who was a sort of guardian to me, brought some of these to his notice. There followed an invitation to attend his class, and for two years I spent as many afternoons as could be spared from Rugby football or tennis in being taught by him or by the admirable drawing-master (MacDonald by name), who did the work of teaching when Ruskin was otherwise engaged.

This, of course, would have been no training for a professional painter, but for an amateur who wanted to learn enough to be able to employ his leisure in painting without being altogether put to shame, it could hardly have been better. Ruskin began by putting one to pencil-point work—generally copies of early Turner outline drawings, of which there are a great many in the Oxford collection. From these he took one on to the simpler kinds of landscape in colour, again using the early Turners for models, and then to objects like a coloured vase or a moss agate or lump of quartz. If you gave him any sort of satisfaction he would take immense pains in teaching you how to put on a clean water-colour wash and floating one colour into another with a wet brush. Now and again he used to sit down beside me and, taking the brush out of my hand, do the thing himself, talking inexhaustibly all the time about Plato and the Book of Job and the wickedness of modern politicians and industrialists. Then there was the perspective class—hexagonal pillars or other equally complicated objects to be placed in a vanishing perspective—with penalties sure and swift if they did not stand a precise measurement afterwards. Benevolent as he was, he was liable to sudden wrath. I remember to this day the confusion he caused when he told a blameless middle-aged

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lady in the water-colour class what he thought of her "damned washings-out."

With Turner he started and to Turner he returned. Modern art critics seem to have no appreciation of Turner's miraculous technique in water-colour and the extraordinary range of it from the detailed architectural drawings of the early period to the swift impressionism of the later. Ruskin forgave everything to Turner, but of his pupils he required the strictest accuracy in detail, and I remember to this day the scolding I got when I showed him a slapdash sketch of trees by a pond which I imagined to be in the manner of Constable. He said that even if it was a good drawing instead of being a bad one, as it was, I should have no right to paint like that until I was much older. I was to go back to the place, draw the trees carefully and reverentially, follow the curves of each bough, and learn modesty in the presence of Nature. Years later when talking to Rodin I heard him use almost exactly the same language.

I continue to think that this was a pretty good beginning for an amateur. It took the conceit out of you, taught you to look carefully at things and got well into your head that even a moderate accomplishment in this art needed a good deal of hard work. To this day, when I am tempted to take some of the higher liberties with trees or other natural objects, I hear the voice of Ruskin saying, "Draw it in careful outline before you think of taking a brush." Careful outlines are out of favour with the more advanced painters at this moment, but for the amateur who is not dreaming of being an advanced painter it remains good advice.

A very few amateurs have made a success of oil-painting, but I quickly decided that I should not be one of them. At first blush the technique seems easier than water-colour, and a small sketch in oils may be carried off successfully by a lucky fluke. But an ordinary-sized canvas by

an amateur seldom bears inspection, and very often reveals fatal flaws after it has been kept a month. Oil-painting is a whole-time occupation; it requires a studio and an apparatus which is heavy and dirty and tiresome to carry about. If he keeps to the proper size of a water-colour drawing, the amateur will generally not need an easel, and he can carry his tools (including water-bottle and white enamelled plate) in a small bag. As often as not he will prefer to sit on the ground.

For the reasons I have stated the amateur should abjure "art" as expounded by art critics in newspapers and periodicals. Not for him the high flights of "cubism," "surrealism," "abstract painting" and other things admired by moderns. If he discovers that he can with very little effort emulate some of the most admired masters in these styles, he is lost. His buildings will cease to stand upright, his trees will grow the wrong way up, he will make water run uphill. To be "representational"—a word of deepest infamy in the mouth of a modern critic—is precisely his ambition, and he may think himself lucky if he can achieve a plausible resemblance to objects seen in sunlight and shadow, something which may be a reminder to himself and any others who may take an interest in his proceedings, of what he saw and felt on a particular occasion. After all, this has been sufficient for many of the world's greatest painters, and the amateur will find it difficult enough.

I am not a man of letters, but a journalist. My pen throughout my life has been a tool for action in the world of practical affairs, and I have never engaged it in romantic or imaginative writing. It is enough for the journalist if he occasionally achieves a neat phrase or pleasant-sounding paragraph. In the same way my pencil has served me first of all for the practical purpose of setting down actual things or scenes which have been part of my life, and it is

only accidentally, so to speak, that I think of them as having any artistic purpose. Amateurs have to beware of a peculiar kind of vanity. A good writer takes his writing for granted, but he is inordinately proud of his piano-playing, his painting, his public speaking. Tell him that his playing reminds you of Paderewski, his painting of Constable, and his speaking of Winston Churchill, and he is in the seventh heaven. I never was so flattered in my life as when, having contributed a few drawings to an exhibition of paintings by literary men, I caught the attention of the art critic of the *Morning Post*, who declared that I had "missed my vocation" and was obviously intended by nature to be a painter—a verdict which his editor rather slyly confirmed by putting it in a large-type headline on top of his article. For one giddy moment the reflection on my normal occupation passed unobserved while I basked in this tribute to my hidden talent. Then I pulled myself together and came to the sober and proper conclusion that, if I let myself be lured into competition with real painters who devoted a life-time to the business, I should very speedily be found out and, literally, make an exhibition of myself.

The amateur should know just enough of what is called "art" to be able to judge how bad a large number—if not even a large majority—of the things he produces really are. This will give him equal vexation and pleasure, the vexation of so often missing the mark, and the pleasure when now and again he seems to have got near it. In that way he gets a sense of sport in his pursuit of nature which (I should guess from appearances) is too great a luxury for most professional artists. They, having their bread to earn, must find out what they can do, stick to it and standardize it, so long as they can find a market for it. To judge from the appearance of picture galleries this rule seems to apply quite as much to the advanced modern as to the old-fashioned academic painters.

The amateur, on the other hand, can splash about as much as he likes, and if he fails and tears up, nothing is lost but a few pennies' worth of paper and paint. The one thing essential for him is that he should have a clear idea of what he is trying to do and have enough sense to see how far short of it most of his efforts will be—indeed, must be. On these terms he will keep alive the sense of sport in his encounter with Nature and have all the pleasure of occasional success following many defeats. Otherwise his efforts will be a series of muddled experiments, one on top of another, to the ruin—whether in oils or water-colour, but especially in water-colour—of any result which will bear inspection.

Practised on these terms amateur sketching is the most diverting of all occupations, “diverting” in the literal sense of the word, for it does literally turn the mind away from all else that may have filled it or darkened it, and for the time being keep it absorbed in the new occupation. You stalk your subject, wait for the right moment to catch it and fix it, and then have an hour or two of alternate delight and despair, delight at the wonders of light and colour, despair of reducing them to a flat wash on a white piece of paper. The simplest subject will do this for you ; a yellow-washed wall with shadow falling on it will call half your paint-box into action ; a tree you thought green will reveal blues and purples in its depths, you will exhaust your umbers and madders in the effort to get its different shades of green in relief against one another. Now and again you will achieve something which you may think worth keeping ; more often you will acknowledge defeat and promise yourself to come again and do better, but in either case you will have had for the time being a perfect diversion, and something will have sunk into you and remain.

The drawback is that this absorption is for the time being so complete that the return to your normal occupation is

very difficult. Sometimes my wife says to me : " This is a beautiful morning, just the day for the sketch you promised me looking up the garden to the woods ; go out and put off your writing to the afternoon." I say : " Quite impossible, for after sketching in the morning I shall be quite unfit for writing in the afternoon. I shall be filled up with the garden and the woods and shall need a night in bed to get rid of them." For this reason the amateur will generally have to do his sketching from Nature, paint pictures as it is called, on his holidays, or on a free day at the end of the week. Even so he will have certain difficulties. He will not be popular with companions who want to move on ; the time given to painting will be deducted from the time available for other sorts of sport ; if he tries to paint where there are lookers-on, he will be an object of public curiosity, perhaps even ridicule.

None of this, however, touches the secret, quiet habit of carrying a sketch-book and pencil in your pocket and confiding to it your observations on your walks at home or abroad. A little practice will train your memory to keep the general aspect of the scene in mind until you get home and can fix your outline with a wash of colour. It is—to me, at all events—much greater fun than photography and takes hardly, if at all, longer. Do this, and as time goes on you will have a continuous diary of your walks and travels which will bring back to you not merely the particular scene, but what you were feeling and thinking, and all manner of little incidentals, such as who was with you and where you were coming from and where you were going next on that particular day.

I have a pile of these little sketch-books containing jottings from half the world in a fine disorder just as they fell. Large numbers of them have no merit artistically, and I hope they will never meet any other eye. But some of the worst still speak to me personally, and I get an

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innocent and tranquillizing sort of feeling when I go back on them and bring past days and hours to life again. In what follows I am trying the experiment of taking the reader with me in some of these excursions into the old sketch-books.

## CHAPTER III

### OLD SKETCH-BOOKS

#### I

TO-DAY I have been turning over a sketch-book of about ten inches by five inches belonging to the years 1882 and 1883. In it is a drawing of the room in Balliol which I occupied as an undergraduate in those years. It is carefully drawn and neatly coloured and the detail is a little epitome of my life at that time. The room was on the second floor in the remotest part of the back Quad, and it was one of the few very old rooms in the college. After a first term as a "fresher" in the front Quad I was given the choice of several and had no difficulty in securing this one, for my contemporaries thought it remote and inconvenient.

The drawing shows the part of this room which specially took my fancy—an alcove with a long latticed window looking towards St. Giles's. A writing-table of some light wood with drawers on either side stands just below the window, and in front of it is an arm-chair of the ordinary sitting-up office type. In one corner is an easel with a water-colour on it; in the other a music-stand bearing (I think) Spohr's violin exercises. Hanging on the wall is a book-case full of books, and in the left foreground one of those standing-up reading desks which are (or used to be) common in Oxford rooms. A picture in a gold frame leans against the window and another, recognizably a stretch of Cornish coast, occupies the reading desk. These two were

my only two efforts in oil-painting and were marked down for destruction the following year. A long wooden beam supports the ceiling and another runs at right-angles from it to the window. A blue and yellow Chinese lantern hangs from the ceiling in front of the window. There are photographs on miniature easels—a truly Victorian touch—on the table and seven framed water-colours on the walls. On the whole, there is not much wrong with the drawing.

All very trivial, but for me it stirs a hundred memories. I see faces and hear voices in that room—friends calling to me to come out; midnight debates in which I defended the ethics of Herbert Spencer against Hegelian assaults; impatient knockings of my neighbours when I practised Spohr's exercises on my fiddle, retaliation by a horn-blower on the floor below; Walter Pater delivering one of his essays to the Arts Club which occasionally met in these rooms; the incessant fight going on inside me between painting, fiddling, scholarship, philosophy and Rugby football, concentration on the last of which, if my tutors had permitted, might have won me a "blue."

## II

I turn a few pages and the scene shifts to South Devon, August and September, 1883. In that summer I had increased my pocket-money by taking a tutorship to a backward lad, the son of rich parents. He was all right, but his mother submitted me to the little mortifications thought appropriate in those days for the hireling who is a little more than a butler but a good deal less than a guest. This wounded my vanity, and I consoled myself with long solitary walks, sketch-book in pocket. The house was in the lovely South Devon country with Dartmoor towering

above, and many waters running down to the lakes and estuaries which find their way to the sea near Plymouth. At the end of August I begged a day or two off, and sitting on top of the Chagford coach ran into the tremendous storm on Dartmoor of September 1st, 1883. This chimed in with my mood, and as soon as I got to shelter in the inn, I tried frantically to set down my impressions of racing clouds and driving rain over the moors.

Most of these were failures, but a few done the next day when the storm had blown itself out make a curious little record of clearing after storm on the high moors. The first is all grey with rain blotting the distance and grey walls by the side of the road repeating the sad motif ; the second and third show the colour gradually reappearing, the outlines becoming hard and clear, and long rims of light appearing behind the distant moors. I have never shown these drawings to any other human being, but to me they are the story of a beautiful storm carried through its various chapters.

The same book contains notes of what Whistler used to call very foolish sunsets. They were done indoors from pencil notes in which the colours were recorded by letters of the alphabet (*b* for blue, *y* for yellow, *g* for green, *v* for vermillion, etc.). One is a reduced copy from memory of a large drawing done for the Slade teacher—a fishing-smack in black silhouette against a flaming sky on a calm sea reflecting the same. Getting a nicely graduated wash from pale yellow through apple-green to orange and scarlet, and thence to the final blue without break or seam is good exercise for the amateur, and I don't regret the hours spent on it. But I soon came to the conclusion that sunsets were better avoided by the amateur, and indeed by most painters. The sentimental picture-postcard effect which is the usual result is intolerable on a cool inspection. Only a very great artist can get the depth and richness of

the actual scene. A hint of sunset sky as a background to hills or woods in a fading light is the limit of amateur effort.

Similarly with autumn tints out of which some popular Academicians made fortunes fifty years ago. In recent years I have seen some of their most applauded efforts selling for five pounds in provincial picture shops, and judged their fate to be well-deserved. The amateur will discover that the nearer he gets to the truth about autumn in some glorious October the more abominable is the thing he is producing. My sketch-books contain several efforts of this kind and I am prepared to swear that the colours are not in the least exaggerated, but the result is lamentable. One of the things you have to discover as you go along is that colours faithfully matched produced an entirely different effect on paper or canvas from what they do in nature.

Yet even these misplaced efforts serve my purpose. Looking over them they bring back memories of beautiful scenes and glorious days on which to be defeated heightened one's sense of the wonder and mystery of nature and her cunning trick of making harmony out of discord. In the autumn of 1884—the year of the great "Krakatoa" sunsets when the enormous eruption of that volcano had coloured the skies all over the world—I sat for hours on Claverton Down, near Bath, trying to record my impressions of the evening glow, this time with brush and paint-box. Artistically the result was worthless but the effort fixed in my memory picture after picture of those wonderful skies. These remain with me still.

## III

I will now drop chronology and take my sketch-books at random from a pile in front of me. There is a good deal of blank paper in some of them, but as a rule, in starting on a

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journey, I took any which was partly full and went on with it. Thus any one book may be a mix of several years and three continents. Sometimes a book was lost on one of its journeys, but most survived.

The one before me is rather larger than most. It has been to Switzerland, Savoy, the south of France, all over the United States and the West Indies, and contains forty-five drawings or coloured sketches. It opens with charcoal studies of olive trees near Monte Carlo, passes to similar studies of chalets and rocks and snow done in Savoy, and jumps abruptly to a wild dash at a sky-scraper in New York. The chalet studies became the basis of a larger drawing, and taken together they recall a difficult encounter with one of nature's stubbornest problems. It was easy—or comparatively so—to draw the chalets by themselves, but to place them on their ridge against a background of deep valley and soaring snow mountains, all in glittering sunlight, was the kind of desperate venture which needs the valour of ignorance. I have the bigger drawing in my portfolio and certainly it does not solve the problem. It is really two drawings, the chalets quite nicely done, and the background not so bad, but they are not on speaking terms with one another.

Yet again as I look at it, it brings back to me three mornings which were a pure delight. I smell the peaty smoke coming from the chalet chimneys, sniff the mountain air, feel that exhilaration which one gets at about the 4,000 feet level looking up to the snows and down into the deep green valleys. The landscape suggests all manner of scents and sounds, and the angelus seems again to be ringing from the little church tower in the valley. Is there in the world a more beautiful sound than that of bells in the mountains?

I turn a page and my eye falls on one of the wettest scenes in my whole record. It is pouring with rain, a mass

of swirling grey water, flecked with white, stretches from the foreground to a low shore about two miles away, and eddies angrily round a wooded island on the near side. The time is November and the trees are half bare. This is the Niagara river on its last mad rush to the falls. I would not at all disparage the ordinary view of that great and famous piece of natural exhibitionism, for no familiarity can ever stale it. But there is a singular fascination in seeing it, so to speak, from behind the scenes, seeing this enormous volume of water gathering force for its final leap into the abyss. Does it know what is in front of it, is it exultant or frightened? A sense of tumult and insurgency as it becomes aware of its adventure and a sort of proud yielding to fate in the calm before the end—all this and heaven knows what other fantastic thoughts one reads into it watching from above. I defy the most hardened anti-sentimentalist to resist the thought of an immense animated something in the grip of fate.

It would be absurd to say that my little drawing expresses these thoughts, but it does bring them back to me and I live over again the hours I spent watching that scene.

I turn a page and am in the train between San Francisco and Grand Canyon, snatching glimpses of New Mexico as we go along. One, towards the sunset, is that queer kind of landscape I have never seen except in this part of America; a foreground of desert dotted with green sage bushes sloping up towards pale brown rocks which rise tier above tier with snow terraces between them. On the rocks are strong perpendicular markings and now and again their line is broken by a pointed spire. My next effort is a twilight impression of the Zinni mountains, the country of Willa Cather's Archbishop. This is a wild struggle after the impossible, and the outline trembles where the train

jogged my elbow.<sup>1</sup> I have never showed it to anyone except my wife, but to me it recalls a scene of singular beauty—a phantom line of snow-covered mountains rising above hills and valleys on which dusk is falling, a winding road lost in twilight, the hint of a village and smoke ascending.

A few pages on I am dabbing at the "great Smoky Mountains" at Ashville in North Carolina, now from the roadside, now in the very comfortable hotel from which we had an immense view of them. They are below the snow-line and though it is mid-winter, there is no visible snow on them. But in an atmosphere which descends to ten below zero after nightfall they take on a vivid scintillating kind of colour. A warm sun made it possible to sketch out of doors for an hour or so about midday, but this was apt to be curtailed, for if I was observed by a passing motorist, I immediately became an object of compassion and rescue. He (or she) insisted on seizing me, bundling me into his car and depositing me with a warning at the door of the hotel. Americans are incurably compassionate in this way; they presume that nobody walks when he can drive, and that nobody sits out of doors in mid-winter with the thermometer well below freezing point, unless he is suicidal. If you are seen doing it they infer that your car has broken down and left you stranded. My wife and I had the greatest difficulty in walking about Ashville. We were always being picked up and taken home, and so polite were our rescuers that it seemed ungracious to explain. The chief suggestion which one of these sketches brings back to me is that of an extraordinarily kind lady who whisked me home when I had only just begun it. She said (truly) that the water would freeze on my paper, and that if only a little wind sprang

<sup>1</sup> How the colour got into it I cannot recollect, but I imagine at one of the long stops on the next day's journey.

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up, I should assuredly be frost-bitten in both ears. (Water freezing on paper gives the amateur one of his best effects, as I had discovered in the Engadine.)

The drawings done from the hotel survive. My drawing paper was running out and some are done on both sides of the same piece of paper. I keep them for what they recall to me—a five-fold rampart of mountains rising up one behind the other to about 7,000 feet, with suggestions of deep wooded valleys between. The subject called for all the blues, purples, madders and deep greens that could be brought into action in a feverish hour, and became a muddy confusion if that hour slopped over into a second hour. The slightest wavering about the relation of a lower range to a higher one behind it is fatal in drawings of this kind ; you have to make up your mind at the beginning and stick to it, though it changes with every minute that passes. The professional turns his back and says that these highly romantic multi-coloured subjects are not for him. He is right, and my drawings would richly explain the reasons why. Yet I do not destroy them, for again it is precisely the sense of defeat which brings back to me the wonder of the scene ; and, after all, it does no harm to anyone else.

I turn the pages backwards and forwards and now get a glimpse of a garden at Santa Barbara in California with a great eucalyptus wood running down to the pale blue Pacific ; then charcoal pencil sketches of waves in mid-Atlantic, then back to the Mediterranean with more studies of olives and bits of the lovely Monaco gardens, the shore at Lavandou, the look over red roofs to the sea from the terrace at Bormes-les-Mimosas—*aide-mémoires* which enable me as I sit in my room at home to live happy hours over again, to go walks over mountains and by the seashore, down the valley from Bormes to where Cézanne painted one of his loveliest pictures of Mediterranean sea and shore.

Another page takes me abruptly to the West Indies. I

am sitting on the deck of a steamer looking across the water to Nelson's famous fort at Antigua. This, with its turret and barracks, is planted on one of two projecting cliffs which enclose an enchanting little bay with thickly wooded hills rising from its shores. Above there is a great white cloud preparing one of the little bursts of silver rain which come and go every half-hour in the winter months in this region. The sea is pale blue and a shadow cast by a cloud overhead falls across it, leaving a long stretch of water in pure sunlight with a dazzling white margin where it strikes the shore.

This is the theme and I make just enough of it in my sketch to enable me to recall its variations. A fumbled little patch on a hill-side records my irritation when a well-meaning young man sat down on a deck-chair just behind me and took an encouraging interest in what I was doing. This is one of the worst afflictions of the amateur, and it does not improve matters that he knows his reactions to be silly and self-conscious. I have schooled myself to get on amiable terms with the children who come round if one sits out in the street, but an interested adult sends me flying. This one checked me just at the moment when I was planning to place a nice-looking schooner on the enchanted sea.

Turning a few pages I come upon a careful drawing of an immense beetle with ferocious projecting mandibles. This is a portrait of Hercules Dynastes taken from a (fortunately) dead specimen in the little museum in the island of Dominica. It was, so far as I could judge, the pride of the island, and they claimed for it that it was the largest and most dangerous beetle in the world, with a wing capacity equal to that of a small bat. The mandibles inflicted great gashes on human flesh. I expressed a hope that it was not very common, but the black boy who acted as my guide on the island said that, on the contrary, it was

very common. Anyhow, it was comforting to learn that it only flew by night when I should have returned to my ship. I have half a dozen pencil scribbles of Dominica by day, and they fix it in my memory as the quintessence of tropical islandry, a sort of composite picture of back-cloths to nautical operas and illustrations to "Robinson Crusoe" and "Masterman Ready." Everything was there, tall palms, impenetrable forests, enormous trees, purple mountains, Union Jacks flying from the roofs of white houses, ultramarine and emerald green seas, fascinating as nature paints it, full of warning to the amateur or any sort of painter.

A biggish drawing done from Constant Springs near Kingston, Jamaica, would illustrate this meaning, if ever it escaped from the portfolio in which it is interred. I keep it partly as a curiosity, partly to jog my memory of a great bamboo grove drenched in sunlight against a background of velvety green forest with a glimpse of blue mountains and shining sea beyond. My sketch-book is filled with little pencil scribbles of the Islands—Santa Lucia, St. Vincent from the sea, the lovely Governor's garden at Grenada, the long coastline of Trinidad—all memory-jogging to me but undecipherable to others. A faint aroma of remorse still clings to one of these. I was solemnly pledged to attend a conference on the sugar industry in Port of Spain and to contribute my views on the iniquity of the British beet subsidy. Instead of which, the thermometer being 100° in the shade, I hired a car and drove twelve miles through cocoa trees and banana groves to a delicious little sandy cove with rocks and woods on either side and the blue mountains of Venezuela closing the distance. There for an hour or more I plunged in and out of great green waves, with a little black boy looking out for sharks and a large long-legged, big-billed bird flapping about my head. What happened at the Sugar Conference I never dared inquire.

To make my sketch diary complete I have records of every house or cottage in the country that we have lived in for the last forty years. My wife would have liked me to round them off by sitting in Cadogan Gardens and drawing the block of flats, the top three storeys of which were our home in London for seventeen years. About that my courage failed me, but no others go unrecorded.

There was the little farmhouse at Bix, near Henley, half of which we occupied at week-ends for twelve years. Every corner of that—a mixed sixteenth and eighteenth-century building with a wonderful old barn attached to it—had some sort of attention. Attempts to record spring and summer in the garden and the orchard threw politics and all that into the background during many busy years and kept me absorbed and exasperated for the time being. To draw a herbaceous border in such a way that it won't look like a leaf out of a seedsman's catalogue is a fair doing for an amateur.<sup>1</sup> Let him begin by vowing that there shall be no flower in it, at least in the foreground, which is not recognizable for what it is meant to be, and he will be on the right road. Let him be sure that there is a well-defined shadow falling over one part of it, and avoid all frontal attacks upon masses in unrelieved sunlight. Let him throw away his white paint before he begins and not trust to mend his drawing by dabs of it towards the end. Having thus resolved, let him take a well-sharpened pencil and draw in about half a dozen flowers in careful outline. Follow this outline with whatever he thinks the colour of the background to be—brown earth, green leaves—keeping his colour wet, and he will then have sharply defined spaces on which he may paint in the details of the flowers. There will be patches left which will presently paint themselves, for it is one of the tricks of the eye to carry the defined

<sup>1</sup> The next two paragraphs are intended for my brother amateurs and may be skipped by others.

parts into the undefined, and not to overpaint the latter is the secret of keeping a drawing broad and avoiding niggling and stippling.

The result is a little like tapestry, but it is within the range of the amateur, which painting flowers in masses generally is not. Before me is a patch of garden on either side of the gravel path in mid-April. To the right are clumps of daffodils and narcissus, to the left arabis, viola, montbretia (fortunately not too much), violets in leaf, ranunculus, coltsfoot. I can make them all out and recall the mood in which the thing was done. There are other studies of the big border, in which a dozen flowers are recognizable. In the same years were dozens of studies of trees in blossom—pears, apples, cherries, plums—of which some sold for a guinea at bazaars, and more were used to decorate wards in my wife's war hospital. The highest compliment ever paid to a drawing of mine came from an Australian wounded soldier who begged to be allowed to take home with him one of a Ribston pippin in fruit which—so he alleged—had kept him reminded of a tree in an orchard "at home" and helped him through a long and wearisome lying in bed. These are the little things that make life worth living to an amateur.

Except for a few that I have kept, the blossom drawings passed out of existence or were sold for a few shillings at the auction which followed the closing of the hospital. But the sketch-books of this period survive, and turning them over I can repeat walks in old days, over the commons or through the great beechwoods in the Chilterns, and stop to look at cottages and farmhouses on the way. I have turned aside on these walks to make notes of the fascinating curves, uphill or downhill, of the road from Henley to Huntercombe, noted it curving down against a background of wintry woods, twisting up between hedges and ploughed fields to a hilltop with a big sky behind it. The lovely little park

called "Grey's" gives me a dozen studies of trees. Often I have returned to the same spot and tried again and again to capture a certain impression and retired beaten. The drawings of these years are a mixed bag—some done in the open, others pencil outlines in a sketch-book with the colours washed in when I got back. This should be done at once before memory fades.

Odd little memories are stirred as I turn over the leaves. Here is the corner of the wood where the Yorkshire terrier went off on secret errands of his own from which he returned barking about two in the morning. There, in the orchard as I sat drawing the Blenheim orange tree, came a party of calves and butted me in the back and licked my coat with their rough tongues. I don't know how animals behave to professional painters, but they are extremely inquisitive about the doings of amateurs. I have sat sketching in Switzerland and a marmot—one of the shyest of little animals—has come out of his hole and sat all but touching me for a good half hour. Sheep are extremely inquisitive. At one time I used to take a square deck-table and camp-stool into a field in which a flock was grazing. I had no sooner set to work than they came to see what was up, and in a few minutes half a dozen were standing close to me with their faces on the table. Cows and horses also take a sometimes embarrassing interest. Cows are generally quite harmless; they come and sniff at you and then continue their meal. But horses need watching. As a rule they are quite benevolent, and only want to see what is happening, but when out to grass they have an innocent habit of kicking up their heels, and this done suddenly behind your back is unsettling. You can quite safely draw horses, but then they are in front of you.

By some freak the Chiltern sketch-book accompanied me on a visit to the Front in 1916, and breaking in on its placid record I find a pencil sketch of the camp at Fricourt, from

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which the Somme offensive started in July, 1916. Guns, lorries, trains, horses are now indicated and the bare trees in the background are severely shellshocked. Stowed away in an attic are a dozen larger drawings with colours worked into them, fleeting glimpses of the Somme battle, Vimy Ridge, Messines Ridge, the Argonne, Verdun and other points on that stupendous battle line. Snatching these little sketches under the drone of shells was not quite the same thing as sitting in the orchard at Bix with the calves looking on, but the urge to put something down persisted. The second war has blighted these memories, and though I cannot bring myself to destroy them, I never want to look at them again.

## CHAPTER IV

### MORE OLD SKETCH-BOOKS

*continued*

#### I

THE next two sketch-books, like the last, are all over the place, and again take me half round the world and back again. A view of Athens from the sea brings a slight shudder, for though it is in bright sunlight we passed from it into the most dangerous storm I was ever in at sea. We were in an old-fashioned tub which plied between Trieste and Constantinople, and she ran into something very like a cyclone in the Ægean. At the height of this the captain picked up an S O S from a ship in the Adriatic on which he had arranged for his wife to travel, and that decided him to drive through the storm to where he hoped to get news of her. At midnight the first mate told me he had no idea whether we were north or south of the island of Tenedos, but by God's mercy we made the entrance to the Dardanelles. The captain's wife, it turned out afterwards, had prudently not sailed, and he was severely censured for not having run to shelter as other ships had done. His action seemed to me very natural and human, and I headed a petition praising his seamanship and begging that he might be treated leniently.

All this comes back as I look at the little Athens drawing, and opposite is another which also causes a slight discomfort. This is a glimpse of Angora, the Turkish capital,

as it was in December, 1925. It is now a bright new town with garden suburbs and every modern comfort—most creditable to the Turks—but it was then a squalid, tumble-down third-rate oriental market town, with dreadful roads and scarcely anything to eat in it. My lodging, which was little more than a cubicle in the one very Turkish inn, looked on the place of execution where the frequent hangings were done in batches. I had gone to the place in the teeth of warnings by my more prudent friends, but with the connivance of the British authorities in the hope of discovering whether the Turks really intended, as some of them threatened, to go to war, if the League of Nations, in the arbitration then pending, awarded Mosul to Great Britain, and what, if anything, could be done to dissuade them. My inquiry was moderately successful, and the interpreters and secretaries, through whom I communicated with Kemal, were extremely civil and conveyed to me with a modicum of bluff what was in their minds.

But for nearly a week I was the solitary Englishman in the place, and the police, though extremely polite, would not tell me whether or when I should be permitted to return. Their explanation, when eventually they brought me the necessary permit, was that in filling in the details of my *carte d'identité* I had omitted to supply them with my maternal grandmother's maiden name. The delay suggested a less innocent explanation which rather weighed on my spirits and is perhaps reflected in the rather angry browns that indicate the dusty desolation of the place.

Yet there is something rather imposing (and in the view of the terrible earthquake which later devastated this region tragically prophetic) in the volcanic line of distant blue mountains appearing in a gap between the great ridge on which the higher part of the town is built and the steep burnt-amber cliff on the other side. The lower town lies in a hollow between these two and is or was then a mass

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of white houses with mosques and minarets showing at intervals. A scholar might spend some hours in looking at the famous inscription of the monumentum Ancyranum in the forecourt of the Temple of Augustus which was the unique glory of the place before Kemal seized it for his capital. There are other Roman remains scattered everywhere, but they offered small consolation either to me or to the rich Pashas whom Kemal was driving from the stuffy luxury of their homes in Constantinople to this shivering, wind-swept plateau. Some of them he sent back to Constantinople and had them hanged there in the public streets.

These details, I am bound to confess, are not in my drawing, but the next few pages bring back to me something of the relief I felt in getting away from the place and back to Constantinople. One is an impression of the Golden Horn from a room in the British Embassy (very warm and comfortable), with the great cypresses of the Embassy garden rising in the foreground ; the next a glimpse of the "Sweet Waters of Asia," with the hills and gardens on the Asiatic side ; the third an impression of the Bosphorus at the point (just beyond Bebek), where it broadens out and turns sharply to the north on its way to the Black Sea. On the right of this little drawing is what looks like a very solid Norman tower which is joined up by a long wall to a group of houses going down to the water. The eye follows the curve of the bay to a little town by the shore and the whole scene is neatly punctuated by minarets and the black spires of the cypress trees—very black against the shining water.

I romance a little, but this pencil scribble is a real *aide-mémoire*. It was done from the famous Robert College which had most hospitably taken us in and nursed my wife through a sharp attack of illness. Close by was the college chapel, and on a Sunday morning Dr. Gates, the principal, persuaded me to talk to the lads and girls gathered from

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Turkey, Greece, Armenia and all the Balkan States, who were being educated at the college. They seemed to me very attractive and friendly young people, and they took it in good part when I begged them on their return to their own countries not to continue the habit (which seemed so ineradicable in their parents) of killing one another.

Smyrna, its harbour full of shipping and houses and mosques rising steeply from the shore, follows quickly on Constantinople. This has rather a striking modernist touch, owing to the outline having been drawn with an indelible pencil which turned purple when colour was applied to it. A page or two later and I am in the Suez Canal. Five little sketches placed together make what used to be called a "diorama" of the Canal, its narrow bits, its broad bits, the distant glimpse of Suez, the pale sands and yellow ochre hills on the western side. One of them tries to depict the scene at twilight with a line of desert hills catching the light in contrast with dark steel-blue water. Looking at this recalls the mood in which, on those journeys, one strains to fix a vanishing scene at the last moment before dark.

Going forward I find sundry records of the Indian Ocean ; intensely blue waves which memory supplies with flying fish, a wild dash at the great swirl of waters about the islands at the mouth of the Red Sea, a stretch of the deck on the P. and O. s.s. *Ranchi*. I have been this way three times and picked up any sketch-book with unfilled pages that came handy on starting. It thus comes about that glimpses of India and the Indian Ocean are varied with bits of a garden in Berkshire or Cumberland fells and lakes.

India comes in and out of three sketch-books belonging to the years 1911 and 1926. One is entirely filled with pencil sketches done in the train or when I could snatch a moment between excursions and engagements. The first

is a glimpse of the Eastern Ghats—perpendicular rocks like miniature Dolomites rising in hummocks from a foreground of rice fields—seen on the first stage of the journey from Bombay to Calcutta ; the next a rushing river and a little way back a village with palms and bananas rising above a long wall ; the third a spreading view of distant mountains with a citadel-like rock cutting their outline in the middle distance, and big deciduous trees all over the lower slopes, these following the line of a road which runs diagonally across the foreground. The jolting of the train sent my pencil dancing about the paper and imparts a sort of style to what would otherwise be a map-like record of the different levels.

Looking at these three, I think of other things which are not recorded—the big railway carriage all to ourselves, the electric fan buzzing in vain to reduce the sweltering heat, dripping perspiration on neck and back, thirst unquenchable, until one learns to keep it within the limits of possible satisfaction. All this lurks in the little pictures, and all this would I gladly live over again for that special kind of excitement one feels when settled in for a long journey in an eastern country for the first time.

All competent painters are, I am told, agreed that certain subjects in India should be rigorously avoided. The Taj Mahal, the great mountains, most bright objects under cloudless skies. With his itch to get something down, the amateur has no misgivings. The Taj may be vulgarly familiar, decadent, effeminate, sentimental, wedding-cake ornament—all these things I have heard it called by artistic highbrows—but the unsophisticated traveller who sees it for the first time on a winter morning, with its great dome gleaming like ivory against an amber sky, cries out that it is “mystic, wonderful.” Or again at evening when its white marble becomes pink and violet as the sun goes down and the cypresses in the garden are a purple black and

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some faint stir of wind gives an intricate beauty to the reflections in the water below. How shall any normal human being resist its charm? Anyhow, why should he?

I have paid two visits to Agra, the first in 1911, the second in 1926, and on each occasion spent a great many hours in the beautiful garden of the Taj. Half a dozen little sketches and two or three bigger drawings record my struggles and defeats. The whole scene with the flanking mosques and towers, the great red entrance gate, and the vistas, alleys and waterways of the wonderful garden, is so much more than the parts. I have tried it from every angle, have crossed the river to get the view from the other side and struggled for hours to get the criss-cross patterns of black marble on the grassed spaces in a true perspective. Whatever the demerits of these records, they serve my private purpose. I turn them over, and the happy hours come back to me, and my travelling companion is at hand to share them.

Just here I am sitting, with the grey birds they call the "Seven Sisters" taking crumbs out of my hand, when an American lady comes up from behind to watch my struggle with the great red gate. The usual irritation comes over me as I feel her eye and I begin to fumble over the shadows on the intricate ornaments on top of the gate. But she breaks in quite cheerfully: "Say, mister, is that your pastime or your vocation?" She looked rich, and for a misguided moment I was tempted to say "vocation," just to see if she would make me an offer. What I did actually say was "not vocation, madam, nor pastime, nor anything at this moment but trouble and vexation." She gave me her sympathy and left me in peace.

Another of my efforts is associated with a sad Indian gentleman who came and sat beside me and poured out his troubled thoughts about British rule in India. Would

we never understand how galling to him and his fellow-countrymen was the mere thought of being ruled by aliens? Did we think it was any comfort to them to hear incessant talk about our efficiency and the benevolence of our rule? Benevolence, indeed; why year by year we were taking out of India the richest of her products, wheat, jute, tea, etc., in immense quantities! He had learnt by heart and now recited to me with growing excitement what I afterwards discovered to have been a page out of the Indian statistical abstract, the page giving the figures of Indian exports. "Wheat nine hundred and eleven lakhs, jute sixty-two and a quarter crores," and so on to a crashing finale of "oil-seed one million, two hundred and fifty thousand tons"! With that he looked wistfully at the Taj, now glimmering in the twilight, and walked sadly away. As I look at my drawing I hear again "oil-seed one million two hundred and fifty tons."

A few pages on and I am at Darjeeling, making desperate efforts to fix my impressions of that impossible mountain, Kinchinjunga. Two of them bring back my shivering state as I sat at a window soon after sunrise with an eiderdown round my shoulders, watching the incredible transformation scene going forward on its vast massif. Ruskin used to tell of a young lady whom he saw trying to draw all Rome on a loose sheet of paper from the top of St. Peter's, and for years I had thought of that young woman as the classic instance of amateur audacity. But what was she to me, sitting at a hotel window, trying to imprison this stupendous mountain in the little sheets of my sketch-book?

All the same, two of these little sheets do in an extraordinary way recreate the scene for me. On one of them I wrote the colours down on the pencil outline and filled them in afterwards from memory; the other and more sober of the two, done when the great flurry of sunrise had settled down, went straight on to paper with a wet

brush. Two other bigger drawings done at a more reasonable hour show a certain industrious accuracy in tracing the outlines of the great peaks, precipices, glaciers and snow-fields, and they give me something which I do not find in the photographs done through telescopic lenses. To the draughtsman or painter, the baffling quality of the mountain is its disunity. On nine days out of ten a broad, horizontal, straight belt of white or grey cloud stretches right across it from the nine thousand to the fourteen thousand-foot level, leaving the last fourteen thousand feet cut off from its base and swimming in air without visible support. It is a lovely effect as one looks at it ; to see a mountain as high as Mont Blanc sitting lonely in the sky brings home to one better than anything else the incredible height of this mountain. But to cut a drawing in half in this way is quite a different matter. You may do it quite faithfully and literally, but the result is a curiosity requiring verbal explanation.

Peshawar rising steeply from a wooded valley, a glimpse of the Khyber from the High Commissioner's residence, a look into Kashmir with enormous mountains at the back of it, a Punjab village with its irrigation canal, these and half a dozen little scribbles from my window in the train enable me to trace almost day by day our journeys north to the frontier and back again through Lahore to Delhi. At Delhi I made a note of the old Vice-regal Lodge before the new one was built, and can paint in from memory the wonderful herbaceous border in its charming garden. Then I am walking along the "Ridge," stopping to sketch in the great view from its highest point, and a day later (March 2, 1926) sitting to jot down an impression of the lovely pavilion in the Rosaro Gardens. This had to be rather hastily put away when Lady Reading, the Vice-Reine and our hostess on that visit, drove up to take us back to lunch. Three days later we are driving out to the Katub, and I stop to

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make a rather careful note of the deserted city of Purana Quilla, a colossal fortress-ruin, with the trees growing densely up to its immense walls.

We go north again and are back at Lahore, where I am busy all day long talking to important Indian gentlemen, making expeditions to see great engineering works, writing articles for my newspaper in London, normal occupations from which sketching is truancy and trifling. My only records of these days are two impressions of Government House, Lahore, a big rambling white house with immense cypresses flanking its drive, and other great trees closing it in. The speciality of this house is that built into it is a Moslem Mausoleum which now serves as the official dining-room. Sitting at dinner, you look up into the dome of the tomb and wonder a little what has happened to its previous occupant.

Follow three train-window impressions of a journey through Rajputana on the way to Nawanager, capital of Jamnagar, the territory of the famous Jam Sahib—more famous still as Ranjitsinghi, the great cricketer—who is our next host. One shows a little Indian hump-back cow standing by a stream beyond which is a village of mud huts with thatched roofs, and a background of trees and mountains; another a castle on a rocky eminence, with great walls and a domed building rising over the lower part of it; another is a rather ghostly image of a tall young Rajput with high turban and long streamers down his back. One remains which revives a less pleasant memory. An open plain dotted with big trees and villages showing between them, rises to a background of mountains on which there is just beginning the great dust-storm which for the next ten hours kept us sweltering and choking in our carriage, with the dust filtering through tightly shuttered windows, filling our noses, making our eyes smart, getting inside our clothes. It was worse and far longer than any

Egyptian sand-storm I have known. To get out of our dark and dusty carriage into the cool white princely train which our host sent to meet us at his frontier was one of those quick transitions from bad to good which almost make the bad worth while.

All this is somehow within the four corners of my little drawing. Follows a biggish study of the great round fort which towers above the lake at Jamnagar. I never saw anything like it in India or elsewhere, and its freakishness tempted me to put it on paper. But my mind has wavered between a conscientious desire to get it down accurately and to capture something of the silver light which plays on it and is reflected in the water below. This is one of the troubles of an amateur ; he is never quite certain whether he is drawing an old fort or trying to do something with sun and water. Another biggish drawing is of a corner of the old palace at Jamnagar, with a richly decorated bow window thrown out above a great carved door. An immense dark green tree throws its shadow across the palace wall, but a car was waiting to take me back to dinner, and when I had done the window and the door there was very little time left for the tree.

## II

India has got into other sketch-books. Rabindranath Tagore's great open veranda and hall of audience at Santiniketan, in Bengal, keep company with Mount Etna and bits and ends of my garden in the Weald of Kent. Egypt is ubiquitous. Bits of Egypt are always appearing side by side with bits of Kent and bits of the south of France.

The first time I went to Egypt was as a member of the

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Milner Mission, sent to report on the affairs of that distract ed country, as it was then, in the year after the War. I took sketch-books and painting apparatus with me, but rather furtively. When Bismarck had made up his mind to ruin the unhappy Count von Arnim, one of the worst things he had to say about him was that he played the piano. When you are on a solemn official Mission or writing serious articles and memoranda, and talking to big-wigs about politics and economics, as I so often was on these journeys, it is damaging to be discovered doing little water-colour drawings. (Mr. Churchill gets away with oil-painting, but that is thought to be a more virile occupation.)

The Milner Mission was housed in the Semiramis Hotel at Cairo, which has a large flat roof with superb views over the city and the desert up and down the Nile. To that when the Mission was not sitting, I used to go up by a back staircase, and there I sat by the hour indulging my weakness in complete privacy. Here, not being under the necessity of putting everything away suddenly, I became more ambitious and three or four large drawings resulted.

One, nearly a foot and a half long, is a panorama of all Cairo. The citadel is really rather nicely drawn and well projected from the Mocattam hills, which rise behind it. The city spreads out to right and left, several of the sort of houses that are the pride of rich pashas are sufficiently indicated, together with the patches of dark green trees in their gardens ; domes and minarets break the masses of flat roofs. This drawing drew another of the compliments which now and again bring comfort to the amateur. Seeing it lying on my table, where I had rashly left it exposed, my Labour colleague—a charming Welsh gentleman—said, “ Where did you get that ; it’s just what I want to send home to my wife ; tell me where I can get another like it.”

Having finished the panorama, I turn the other way and look up Nile to the great reach which has the Pyramids and the desert hills behind them on its right, and a fringe of dense green palm-trees on its shore. There are two Nile boats with their inverted swallow-tail sails making up river, and another coming down. Then I turn the other way and see down river a tall minaret rising above a dark green mass of trees with a drift of blue smoke passing across them, the whole mistily reflected in the water below; then, still farther down, a group of house-boats (*dayabeeahs*) huddled against the bank, showing very white against the trees beyond. So on with sundry bits and ends jotted down just as they caught my eye. Looking at these, I can live over again the hours spent on this flat roof, recall my delight and despair at the ever-changing scene, and the wavering of my thoughts between the problem it presented and knotty bits of a memorandum I was writing on the affairs of Egypt.

Scribbles in a pocket-book recall a journey which I took as a member of the Mission up the Nile through Beni-suef into the Fayoum, and thence to Assiut and so on to Luxor. A telegram from Cairo warned me that a party of young Egyptians was out after me, and what exactly they would do to me if they caught me seemed rather uncertain. My guide hurried me on and was extremely impatient of sentimental loitering on the river bank. But at Luxor I took breath and sat down to fix in my memory the great view across the broad stretches of the river to the sandy cliffs enclosing the valley of the Tombs of the Kings, or, turning the other way, across the green strip to the rampart of the eastern desert. To Luxor I came again a few years later and resumed these occupations. The results are the outwards and visible sign of what I felt about this extraordinary City of the Dead.

The Luxor sketches and scribbles keep company in the

sketch-books with views of the Nile and the Pyramids from Helouan, bits and ends of Cobham Park with hawthorn in blossom, and white cows grazing under trees, glimpses of Mediterranean coast from Monte Carlo to Mentone. Yet another book has an almost consecutive record of a three-day journey on a Government steamer from Shellal (the up-river port of Assouan) to Wady Halfa. With its aid I can go this delectable journey over again. The river broadens out to a great lake-like expanse with uninhabited brown shores as we leave Shellal, then we turn a corner and are passing the low brown-and-yellow villages with trees behind them where the Berbers live; another turn shows a stretch of warm brown shore with more flat-roofed houses and green trees between them and high hills in shadow behind them. The wind is on the water, filling the great triangular sails of the Nile boats, which seem to be racing the steamer and trailing their deep blue shadows behind them. Sunset comes on and has faded into darkness before the next page is finished, and is followed by an impression of dawn. The scene, as set, consists of a line of palms, some seeming to stand in the water and all reflected in it, a space of green cultivation to the left, a back-water showing between the trees, and in the distance a jagged line of desert mountains, the lower part grey in the morning twilight, the upper in a faint red glow which, with the orange sky behind it, means that the sun is coming up on the far-side. The water was pure silver and the darker reflections had the sheen of black satin. All this came and went in the twenty minutes between darkness and dawn. The moment the sun appeared, it was all turned into a blazing confusion, dark with excess of light.

A page on and the river is running through a narrow stream with pale brown cliffs on either side, one of which makes a square platform for a big, straggling ruined castle. After this is a long reach where the river makes a hair-pin

bend. Now the sun is up and two boats are scudding under a fresh breeze, their great sails a thrilling white against dense trees standing crisply out on the shore with a long line of sandy hills behind. This and the next two were painted by nature in water-colour, but for the human amateur to transfer them to paper is a far different matter.

An impression of the junction of the two Niles at Khartoum and a great boat with unbelievably blue shadows on its white sails coming head-on round the bend, finishes this series. But two pencil scribbles remind me of the next stage. One shows a big conical mountain with a group of beehive huts at the foot of it, dark trees on the mountain-side and in and out of the huts. This is Solara, the principal village of the Nubas, one of the few all-naked peoples in the world. They were a simple, friendly and highly respectable people, and one could not be long with them without feeling it to be eccentric to wear clothes. Solara is about 500 miles south of Khartoum and was my southernmost point in Africa. I can see on my sketch the ridge from which I looked down on a vast, densely wooded expanse of country fading into a distant blue on the southern horizon. To the west was French Equatorial Africa, to the south the Bahr-El-Ghazal and the Congo. For a few minutes I seemed to be looking over the edge of things into the heart of savage Africa.

The other little scribble represents the Tebaldi tree. It has a flat, barrel-like trunk rising to about two-thirds of its height and short, gesticulating arms sprouting rather than branching from this trunk. It struck me as so like the sort of tree that Arthur Rackham used to put into his pictures of the bad parts of fairy-land that I could not resist making a note of it. It is, nevertheless, I was told, a most serviceable creature and the positive salvation of the villages when the rains fail. It holds water in its trunk, its bark can be woven into fabrics, or converted into rope

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or string, its fruit is nutty and nutritious, its leaves are pleasantly medicinal. It looks like a joke, but is in fact a sort of Woolworth among trees.

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There are half a dozen other little books and a cupboard full of bigger drawings—impressions of Rome, Florence, Venice, the Riviera and its wonderful hinterland of mountains. Almost any one of these taken at random enables me to recapture an hour spent on a mountain-side or by the seashore and some happy struggle with sun and shadow. I am drawing a side canal in steep perspective from the window of our room in Venice, struggling desperately to get the exact deviation from the perpendicular of the beautiful Palazzo Dario, and to make a black gondola sit properly on the water by its white steps. I am looking back on Venice from the Lido and drawing its long shoreline in the year in which the Great Campanile was prostrate, taking a shot at the many-coloured bathing-boxes on the delightful old Lido beach before the bright young things discovered and destroyed it. I am on a ledge of rock by a roaring mountain stream in Savoy trying to discover the pattern of its eddies and tributaries, while an angry fisherman disputes my right to paint where he wants to fish.

I plead for this occupation that it is one of those purely selfish ones which do no harm to anyone else. It has unashamedly the object of making things look like what the unsophisticated eye supposes them to be—which rules it out of all competition with modern professional art. The results need not be shown to anyone except oneself, and they serve their purpose if to oneself they recall happy hours and days. When one takes in the time spent on the different mechanical processes which go to the making of

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photographic snapshots, they take no longer and yet have stored up in them that incommunicable personal something which can never belong to a mechanical process.

So I advise my fellow amateurs not to be driven off this field.

## CHAPTER V

### THE THREE LIVES: A STUDY IN REINCARNATION<sup>1</sup>

#### I

I WAS talking last week to an old friend about the different kinds of life we had led and he put the question, " supposing you had three lives to live, how after your experience would you choose to live them ? "

Then a rather curious thing happened. We both decided that for one of our lives we would, with certain amendments, live over again the lives we had lived. This was not from any complacency or reluctance to acknowledge sins, disappointments, failures, mortifications ; it was simply, when we came up to it, that the thought of missing what we had known and prized—our own bits of love, friendship, beauty, the light and shade on our familiar world, was unendurable. Emptied of these the idea of life seemed suddenly meaningless ; to give it meaning it had to be furnished with the warm and concrete things of our own experience. All this familiar furniture came trailing after us when we began to talk of other lives. We were transporting ourselves, creatures of *this* life drenched in its atmosphere, to some other scene constructed from bits and ends of this scene. The idea of getting out of it and making a fresh start was a fallacy.

Yet the question has a certain meaning, and many times since I have found myself reflecting on it. Supposing I,

<sup>1</sup> This was written before the war and it must be read on the assumption that there is a relative state of peace.

such as I am, had 240 years to live and could pick myself up and start again at the end of each period of eighty years, where and how should I choose to live in the next period and the period after that?

Where? I pass in review the many beautiful scenes I have stored in my memory—an island valley in the West Indies, Dominica or Jamaica; Darjeeling with Kinchin-junga swimming in the high blue; the Amir's garden at Peshawar with the white roses trailing up the black cypresses; a garden in California breaking down to the Pacific; a reach of the Nile between Shellal and Wady Halfa; the valley of the Arve and Mont Blanc from Monnetier-Mornex; a Greek island; sun on a blue sea against white rocks and yellow-washed houses, anywhere in the Mediterranean; the Lake of Galilee and the flowers on the hillside; and so on and so on. But there are very few of the places thus remembered in which I would care to live. In most of the tropical places there are not more than four months of the year in which one could comfortably live. For another six torrid heat, hurricanes, pitiless rain, mosquitoes, snakes, aggressive animals, make life a constant struggle for the humans whose lot is cast in them. They are delightful to visit at their best, but not to live in.

What is called "scenery" is not a good background for the day-to-day life. My wife and I once bought a house which had nothing to recommend it except that it was on a hill-top which commanded a magnificent view. In a moment of enthusiasm we bought the view; but after three years we were very glad to get away from it. It was swept by all the winds; we began by thinking this very healthy, and ended by thinking it a shivering nuisance. More and more I found myself turning my back on the view; it wanted too much of me, and the sense that I was neglecting it became a bother. Wouldn't I come up and

look at the great storm sweeping down the valley, or the violet shadow on the woods, or the big ships moving up the river, or the moonlight on yonder banks? No, I would not, at least not after three years, yet to the end I had a most uncomfortable sense of duty to that view.

So in choosing where for my second life my conclusion would be that the background should be moderate, tranquil, pleasing, but not exciting or exacting. The first half of this second life—perhaps rather more—I would live in a town and by preference a big town. Many exceptions there are of course to this rule, but the normal man in the ordinary contact with his fellow-man will only enjoy the country if he has earned the right to do so by living first in the town. If I were spending my next life as an Englishman, I should want to spend the first half of it in London, Manchester or Birmingham, and the last half on the verge of what is called the "green belt" within reach of London.

But this begs a question. Could I, with all the world to choose from, afford to spend a second of my three lives as an Englishman? Afford, I say, because there enters into this discussion a certain desire for experience, which is something apart from wishes or preferences. If I really wanted to know all that could be known about humankind in the supposed 240 years, mustn't I get right out of this English or European atmosphere and transfer myself to another hemisphere? I think I must, and for all its drawbacks I should plump for spending my second life in the East. At the end of this, my first life, my chief regret is that I shall never see India and probably not Egypt again. India has a peculiar clinging quality. All told, I spent there only about nine months; yet memory goes back and back to it, and each time pitches on something different. With its stupendous mountains, far-stretching plains, great rivers, tropical forests, noble buildings and the infinite variety of its people, India—much more than

America—is for a European the “new world.” It has, of course, an underworld of dirt, disease, poverty, uncleanness which is an even uglier counterpart of the European slum life, but this slum-life is no more the essential India than the underworld of Europe is the essential Europe. In India one is conscious of a civilisation, a culture, a philosophy, an unbroken immemorial religious life which are not to be found anywhere else in the world.

Baffling and mysterious it all is, but even a brief tasting of it has left me on the impression that a life spent in trying to get within it might bring one nearer the heart of things than any experience of the more sophisticated Western world. India, moreover, has committed herself to an experiment in Western institutions just at the moment when half Europe is turning its back on them. This, too, is profoundly interesting. *Ex oriente lux.* Is it possible that two or three generations hence when Europe has run the gamut of all possible political forms, India in the meantime may have evolved a new form reconciling liberty with authority and proving that Gandhi’s doctrine of non-violence is not the impracticable dream that it is now supposed to be?

That is pure guess-work, but all things considered, I think I would choose India for my next life. Not as an Indian, for my imagination stops short of thinking of myself in any but a European skin, but an Englishman with a faint hope of helping a little from my own democratic European experience, or, if not that, gathering new experience for my third period of eighty years.

## II

Where should that be? I rule out all the totalitarian countries, Russia, Germany, Italy, as they are at present. I cannot imagine myself making the submissions required

to make life merely safe in these countries without a total loss of self-respect. I have talked to Communists, Nazis, and Fascists, and utterly failed to make them even comprehend this point of view. Apparently they cannot understand that for me and my kind liberty and individual rights have intrinsic values for the loss of which none of the rewards offered by their systems—whether material prosperity or national greatness—offer any compensation. At the end of all argument I can only say that I cannot think of myself living happily—I am still so exacting or so simple, whichever it be, as to think happiness one of the objects of human life—under any of them.

So I rule out the totalitarian life, but to get the experience I am thinking of in my 240 years I must not go on being an Englishman. I must get naturalized in some foreign country. Which shall it be?

There are, or were, temptations to choose a small European country, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden. So far as they were out of the main stream of European affairs, and to that extent backwaters, they seemed to offer tranquillity and security. You could live your own life in them without being constantly distracted by fears about your Empire, about what Germany was doing in Central Europe, or Russia in Central Asia, or Italy in Spain. They were small countries in which there were no very rich and no very poor, and you could spend what you had how you liked without being constantly pricked by the uncomfortable thought that you were consuming more than your share. Felicity was surely to be found in a nook with a book or doing something pleasant and artistic in one of these countries.

But with great beasts at large in the European jungle showing the usual contempt of such creatures for their neighbours' landmarks this prospect has lost its charm. What if you were marked down for the next totalitarian

meal of one of these animals? You would in that case have all the anxieties of living in a big country, and all the disadvantages of living in a small one. Wherever it was, bombers and fighters would drone over your retreat, and if you raised any objection the bombs would be dropped on you. You would no doubt get used to this, as all Europeans will, but it would not be the new experience that I should want for my next life. For the same reasons, in spite of all its allurements, I reject France, greatly as I love it. Life in France promises no relief from the dangers and anxieties of life in England and would give me no new political experience.

## III

What then remains? I can think of only one answer for me or the likes of me. I should become an American citizen. That would give me the maximum of possibilities, for in these eighty years the United States will decide its relations to the world, i.e. to Europe and to the Far East, and discover for itself and probably for Europe what are the conditions of a square deal in a democratic country. One has seen it all in the germ in President Roosevelt—his obvious hankерings after a world policy, his efforts to moralize wealth, his unsleeping experiments in both spheres and the queer mixture of pride and alarm with which he is regarded by his own countrymen. With its enormous area, sparse population and immense untouched resources, the United States can afford more failures and so achieve more success in the process of trial and error, by which the free countries find their way, than any other country in the world. Except possibly Russia, and I would rather leave Russia alone until Stalin has done with her.

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Living in America I should go through again some of the stages I have lived through in England. As aeroplanes of increasing size came through the stratosphere at greater and greater speed, I should see the American people waking up to the fact that the Ocean had ceased, as formerly the English Channel, to guarantee security in isolation. Immense aeroplanes capable of 12,000 miles non-stop flights would bring all Eastern America within bombing range from Europe, and the South American states would be under new temptations to intrigue with European countries to throw off the hegemony of the English-speaking nations. If safety first were my object I should by no means have reached the perfect sanctuary, but I should have a larger choice of relatively safe places, and I should be watching the next most interesting stage in the unification of the world. In her new conditions America would have to forget a good deal that she has said about the wickedness of Europe and start again on the problem of world peace. It is all quite unpredictable, but in the eighty years of my next life, I should expect to see the new world coming in again and much more formidably to redress the balance of the old.

### IV

So far, I have considered only my location—the question *where* I should live, not *how* I should live. *How* opens up an entirely new set of questions, if the assumption is that I want new experience and not merely to go on with my present kind of life, the life of a journalist and writer observing how other people behave and advising them how to mend their ways.

For a new experience in my second life, I should like to pursue one of the arts. I wrote some years ago in a phrase which has been widely repeated that the worst of

the artistic temperament is that so many have the temperament and so few the art. It seems to be generally agreed that you cannot have the art without the temperament, but that too would be a change after a life spent on purely practical pursuits. Yet one would learn, I think, that the artistic life is rather different from what the non-artistic think it to be—just yielding to the luxury of creating beautiful things, floating on wings of song, making poetry or music, painting landscapes or portraits in a fine frenzy of creative emotion. I said not long ago to an eminent violinist whom I had just heard play the great Beethoven violin Concerto that to play this great music in perfect accord with the orchestra must be for the player the greatest of artistic sensations. Yes, he said, it is a grand feeling, but don't forget that I played it for four years in my studio, and some parts of it a thousand times over before I dared to go on a platform with it. Behind this again was all the grind of his student days before he could even begin to play serious music on an instrument on which you have to make your own notes as you go along. Similarly in painting and sculpture there is the same imperative grind at the beginning before you can even begin to think of becoming a master.

Plato and Aristotle are haunted by fear of the artistic temperament. Plato will put a garland round the poet's neck and conduct him to the frontier, when he becomes too exciting or, as we might say, too good a poet. Aristotle will have young people brought up to appreciate music but not to practise it except in an amateur way. The professional musician, he says, becomes a mere mechanic pursuing a mercenary employment which "unfits him for the exercise and practice of virtue." My old schoolmaster, who was tone-deaf, used to quote this passage with relish and bade me go and burn my fiddle before it was too late. These are hard sayings, yet I think I should reject music

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in my choice of the artistic life. I have known many virtuous musicians, but whether as composers or performers, they keep their emotions at a level which with my disposition I should find inconveniently high.

All things considered I should choose the life of a painter for my existence as an artist. Preferably a landscape-painter soaking himself in the quiet English landscape with its weather and skies, which seem so beautifully adapted to the painter's art. My models, if I dared, would be Crome, Constable and Cotman, and with due reverence to them, I would borrow something of Sisley and Cézanne. Now and again I would go south or into the tropics just to exercise my eye in bright colours, high lights and deep shadows, but these excursions would be brief and occasional. My home-land would be England, England with its seas and coasts, its orchards and green fields, its parks and woodlands.

But I should want to defer this existence until the twentieth century sects and schools had run their course, and the critics of painting had learnt to use a language which I could understand. It would worry me too much to pick up my daily newspaper and find in it columns about painting, no two consecutive sentences of which conveyed any intelligible idea to me. I should wish to live in a time when the artist is free to work out his own salvation instead of being told how he ought to do it by clever literary dogs.

There are all sorts of professional people, doctors, clergymen, lawyers, judges, schoolmasters, whom I greatly respect and admire, but I don't want to be one of them. I don't want to be in any position in which I should have to pass sentence on my fellow-beings either as preacher or judge. I don't want to convince or convict anybody about anything. Nor having spent one life as a political journalist, do I want to spend another as a politician or statesman.

Except for the few who somehow emerge as historical personages, the ambition which is gratified that way is very short-lived. Who knows the names of yesterday's Cabinet ministers? To be eloquent and honest at one and the same time is as difficult as, in Burke's phrase, "To tax and be loved." Honesty may be the best policy, but it is apt to spoil a peroration. The use of oratory in propaganda during recent years has taken the bloom off the whole business of crowd-compelling and left one with the feeling that it must be classed among the dangerous trades. Reading the speeches of Hitler and Mussolini or listening to them on the wireless is to get the sense that the gift of tongues is a most virulent disease. I go occasionally to public meetings or sit in the gallery of the House of Commons in the hope that I may recapture the thrill with which I heard Gladstone and Bright when I was young, or the intellectual pleasure of a debating speech by Asquith, Balfour and Chamberlain, but I come away in doubt whether the art of public-speaking has declined or I have lost the taste for it. I don't know, but as one grows older one does undoubtedly become more suspicious of all assaults on the emotions. The golden flow of eloquence, as it seemed to be, comes more and more to resemble a cataract of claptrap.

## v

I turn away then from all professions of the propagandist, epideictic, self-assertive, corybantic kind, and for my third life look for something strictly normal and practical. I once asked a workman who, starting as a daily wage-earner, had become a famous politician, which had been the happiest part of his life, and he answered beyond all question his life as a wage-earner. He dwelt specially on its normality, and the difference between the natural

physical fatigue which followed manual work and the brain weariness and exhaustion which followed intellectual effort. Only those who have experienced both have the right to talk in this way ; if I do so, who know only the one life, I shall be told I am talking cant. So I daren't say that I should deliberately choose the workman's life for my third existence—indeed, I know I should not. But if it were chosen for me by some higher power as necessary to complete my existence, I honestly think I could find happiness in it, especially if I were permitted to bring certain experience from my present existence as to the great number of inexpensive things that bring pleasure.

But that, it may be said, is not playing the game. One is not allowed in this way to dodge the issue and get the best of both worlds. The new existence must be a fresh start. Having brought nothing into the world we must take nothing out. So for my third life I would choose the completest breach with the past, something that would release me altogether from the incessant necessity of fitting things to words and words to things—say the life of an engineer or contractor, engaged in making roads, building bridges, draining swamps, constructing docks and harbours, driving tunnels through mountains and under rivers. I once had the good fortune to be asked to write the Life of that great engineer and contractor, Weetman Pearson, Lord Cowdray ; and tracing it from point to point I came to think of it as surpassing in excitement and romance any other career known to me. Considering the good value he gave for it, even the most jealous could scarcely grudge him the great fortune that he made, but that from the point of view of getting the best out of life was only a small part of it. He was at work all over the world, England, America, Mexico, Chile, Peru, Africa, choosing by preference problems which had defeated other people, risking his own life when danger had to be faced, bringing a cool and

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resourceful brain to bear on every emergency, taking all his winnings and staking them on some new throw instead of resting and being thankful, never plundering or predatory or seeking to make at the expense of other people. I think of him as one of the really constructive figures at the end of the nineteenth century. My ambitions are not on this scale, but for my next existence I want some work of this kind—work which will be a complete change from the talking, writing and arguing, which have been my portion in this life.

I perceive that between the different kinds of life I want to lead and the different places in which I should like to live, I am in rather a tangle. But the final synthesis which would bring the time and the place and the loved one—or the desired occupation—all together is beyond me, and I leave it to the higher powers.

## CHAPTER VI

### A B O U T D R E A M S

#### I

THERE is a tabu on talk about dreams. The dreamer who repeats his dream has got voted a bore, and, if that is not enough, he is warned that any dream may be used in evidence against him. For according to Freudian or pseudo-Freudian principles, the most innocent, as he may think it, may be proof conclusive of unholy instincts and appetites raging together at the roots of his being. On one or other of these lines the dreamer who repeats his dream is doomed. If he is not a bore, he will convict himself as a criminal.

Dreams, nevertheless, are among the most interesting things in life, and nothing can prevent unsophisticated people from thinking about them, or, unless they put an ox on their tongues, as the Greeks used to say, from talking about them. The announcement of a symposium on this good old-fashioned subject has set my thoughts running on it and, in spite of the pitfalls, I am tempted to put them on paper.

I have all my life been haunted by a particular kind of dream in which I play a ridiculous or deceitful part. The commonest form of it is the unprepared speech. I am on a platform before a big audience announced to speak on a subject with which I am totally unacquainted. Once this subject was a Spanish poet, whose name I learnt for the first time from a bill stuck up on the walls of the lecture

hall. On that occasion I was not at all discouraged. I invented him as I went along, provided him with a character and life-history, and wound up with quotations from his poetry. I had no misgivings. I carried it through with a growing elation, and never at any moment had the slightest sense of guilt or imposture. It was an enormous success, and the applause woke me up.

This was many years ago, and I have seldom repeated this triumph. Usually the thing ends in my discomfiture—which also wakes me up, but in blessed relief to find it untrue. I think still with horror at my feelings on finding myself on a platform with a fiddle in my hands billed to play Mozart's D minor violin Concerto, my utmost accomplishment on that instrument having been—more than fifty years ago—Spohr's exercises and Handel's very simple sonatas. The sequel to that I don't know, except that I grew dizzy and everything went black. A rather less but still very painful occasion was lecturing on a late Greek philosopher—I think it was Panætius—to an audience composed of people like Dean Inge and Gilbert Murray. What followed I only dimly remember, but I kept going for some time with what must have been an extraordinary impudent and pretentious discourse. Fortunately I woke up before question-time.

The joker within me has many tactics, but all with the object of mortifying or disappointing me. Thus a few weeks ago I wound up my evening's work by putting the last touches to a rather elaborate British history and left it in a pile of typescript on my table ready to be sent to the publisher the next morning. Then I went to bed in a moderate state of self-satisfaction. But I dreamt that when I went to my table the next morning I found that it had all turned into a history of Abyssinia. The shock of this discovery woke me up, but, again, the relief of finding it untrue made it almost worth while.

At other times what strikes me on reflection is the extreme ingenuity of the joker in laying out the scene and providing the properties for my discomfiture. Thus I find myself staying with my wife somewhere in France, and it is the hour before our departure. Our rooms have been in an annexe to the hotel about a hundred yards from the main building. It has been arranged between us that she and her servant should go straight to the station while I go back to the annexe, pick up the luggage and meet her at the station. There was about half an hour before the train went.

I go back to the annexe, but there I find that our luggage has been removed from our rooms, which are now occupied by other guests, and no one knows where it has been put. After a panic search it is collected piece by piece and I get to the station about ten minutes before the train is due to start. Here new complications set in. Half a battalion of young conscripts is being entrained in charge of an officer, whom I mistake for the stationmaster and beg to find me a porter. He is highly offended, and that consumes five minutes in altercation and apology. At length I find a porter, get the luggage weighed and wheeled out on to the platform. But there is not one platform, but half a dozen platforms, and no one knows from which of them my train is going to start—the platform on which I expected my wife to be waiting for me. But lest I should solve the problem by using my eyes and recognizing my wife, the dream-joker arranges at this point that I should have lost my spectacles. My wife and her maid and I and our luggage are now hopelessly separated, and while I am peering about, the porter announces that the train must have gone at least ten minutes ago. This wakes me up, but though again the relief at finding it all an invention is very great, the sense of bafflement—of walking about, like Charlie Chaplin, in a perverse and hostile world where traps are set for my undoing—remains with me for many hours.

I very seldom suffer from what are called nightmares, falling through space, earthquakes, cataclysms, etc., nor can I remember ever to have had repetitions in dreams of dreadful things witnessed or experienced, narrow escapes in war, the sight of dead and wounded, bombs or shells falling, railway accidents, motor accidents and the like. But I am sometimes in my dreams sentenced to be hanged though for what crime I have never clearly ascertained. A curious privilege attaches to my sentence : I am allowed to go for a walk on parole the day before my execution. I walk about with an uncomfortable feeling about my throat and an oppressive sense of what awaits me the next day, and this finally wakes me up, so that I have had no experience of the actual event. These, however, are rare incidents. More frequent is the dream of half-remembered things. In this, to take a fairly common example, I seem to be repeating passages of Greek poetry and prose —passages which possibly I learnt by heart as a boy but have long forgotten in my waking state. Now and again a sentence comes over the threshold in waking. Thus, a few weeks ago, I woke up saying these words : *περιεστηκύιας δὲ τῆς πόλεως τοῦτο τὸ μέρος*, which apparently means “ This is the portion of the city which has fallen into revolution.”<sup>1</sup> I have not the faintest idea where these words come from, and I have asked distinguished scholars and they have been unable to identify them. Perhaps someone who reads this chapter will be able to enlighten me.

These pedantries tempt me to mention another matter still in debate. For the last few years I have lain under suspicion of having invented a Greek quotation about the late Lord Grey in a book entitled “ Men and Things.” I said that as a speaker he reminded me of the Greek definition

<sup>1</sup> An alternative translation suggested to me is, “ This is the share of the city, when it has enlarged its boundaries,” but this is even remoter from any Greek context that I can recall.

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of an orator as the man who persuaded his hearers that he is "the one who is likely to know—*τὸν εἰκότα εἰδεῖν*—" whereupon several correspondents wrote to ask me what Greek said this, and I answered very confidently Aristotle. To this one of my correspondents replied that he was quite certain it was not Aristotle and he didn't think it was Greek. The thing being thus started, passed to several distinguished scholars, who also professed themselves quite unable to identify it, though one of them was pleased to say that he thought it quite good and very likely to be Greek. There the matter stands. The phrase has been in my mind for years, and till now I have never doubted that it was Greek and Aristotle. I should be glad to think that I invented anything so wise, but I am sure I did not. Was it possibly a spill-over from one of my Greek dreams? Perhaps this further mention of it may bring me an answer.

Some dreams raise curious questions of personal identity. Not long ago I dreamt that I landed in England from a strange-looking ship in the year A.D. 610. The date was specially precise in my dream-mind, though how it got there I have not the slightest idea. The scene, too, was vivid enough, a flat, sandy shore rising gradually to a large green meadow. As I landed, a tall, long-haired man wearing a tunic reaching a little below his knees came towards me and asked me who I was. The question was shattering. Who was I landing somewhere in England in the year A.D. 610? It came over me that I had not the slightest idea, and in that moment I felt all the panic a man must feel who finds himself alone in a world where he knows not who he is or where he has come from. The shock of it woke me up, and from that time to this I have always felt a peculiar sympathy with people who are said to have lost their memory. Who was I in the year 610? Who, for that matter, am I in the year 1939?



Since this chapter was written I have made notes of one or two other dreams which may be added here.

One was an example—to me very rare—of a dream in two parts with an interval of waking between. In this I found myself in a mediæval court suing for the recovery of a small debt. The costumes and accessories were all “in period.” To my horror, the judge not only found for me, but sentenced my debtor to have his ears cropped. The executioner was there armed with knives and the prospect of the horrid thing woke me up. I remained awake for about ten minutes, then on falling asleep again found myself back in the same court, this time protesting that I should never have brought this action, if I had supposed that it would bring such a sentence down on my debtor and pleading fervently that it should not be executed. The sequel eluded me, for again I woke up at the critical moment.

In another recent dream I looked into a mirror and saw a face not my own. This particular dream I have had twice in my recollection. In the first the face I saw was the sinister and wicked face of a man much younger than myself; in the second it was the handsome and very benevolent face of an old Oriental wearing a burnous. Seeing somebody else's face in a looking-glass is an extraordinary sensation and, until it happened to me, I could never have imagined the sort of ice-in-the-spine sensation it creates.

A third also was of a rather special kind. *I dreamt that I had a sleepless night.* I put out my light about half-past twelve and then, so it seemed, stayed awake interminably. Then in despair I decided to turn up my light and read. When I did, I looked at my watch and found that it was half-past seven. I had in fact slept continuously for seven hours. Yet, but for that evidence, I should have been prepared to swear that I hadn't slept a wink. My dream counterfeited all the symptoms and sensations of insomnia.

Speaking generally, my dreams seem to be fragments of my waking life arranged in patterns like bits of glass in a kaleidoscope. Little vexations and trivialities play a large part in them. Thus a few nights ago I was momentarily vexed by finding that I had run out of writing-paper and had to go downstairs to replenish my stock. An hour or two later when I went to sleep I dreamt that, though I was in a newspaper office, not a scrap of paper could be found on which I could write an article that had to be finished in half an hour. Everyone searched, but without result. Then someone thought of cutting off the margins from a copy of the paper which was lying about, and pasting bits of them together (pasting on to what I don't know). But it was too late, for by this time the newspaper had gone to press. Again, what struck me was the ingenuity with which the dream-maker made a consecutive story out of his very trifling material.

But on the other hand the dream-maker or my subconscious self, or whatever else it is called, often does me a considerable service. One of the difficulties of my kind of life is that engagements made long ahead slop backwards, so to speak, and disturb my day-to-day tasks. Thus I have promised to deliver an article or make a speech three or four weeks ahead. If I keep thinking of it between now and then, it will be an incessant worry. So I say to myself, and sometimes say three times, this thing has to be begun on such and such a date, and then dismiss it from my mind. When I come up to the date I nearly always find that a large part of it has been done for me. The mysterious agent, whether sleeping or waking, has sorted out of the pigeon-holes of my memory nearly all that bears on the subject and arranged it in order for me, without any conscious effort on my own part. I am sure that in this way one can get the unconscious or sub-conscious part of one to do a good deal of work for the conscious part.

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Anyhow, we shall only get knowledge on this largely unexplored subject if we contribute our own experience. It is, therefore, a mistake to impose a tabu on talk about dreams.

## CHAPTER VII

### A B O U T W R I T I N G

#### I

WHENEVER I am serving on a Committee or Royal Commission and there is occasion to draw up a memorandum or a communication to the newspapers, my fellow members turn to me. "You," they say, "who have been writing all your life, will do it in no time, and you will know far better than we how it ought to be done." Someone suggests that I have only to go into the next room and dictate to a shorthand writer and it will be finished in ten minutes.

Almost invariably I succumb, not because I am flattered by this way of putting it, but because I lack the courage to tell the simple truth, which is that after more than fifty years writing is still, as always to me, sweating blood, and that in the course of these years I have gathered all sorts of crochets and superstitions which make it even more difficult for me than for an ordinary man of business to do the kind of thing they want. Dictating to a shorthand writer, which is child's play to him, is an abomination to me. He sits down, takes a flying start, rattles it off in any sort of order, stops dead, sits back, starts again and does another thousand words in about ten minutes. I sit staring at the woman, make a false start, tell her to begin again, go fumbling along for the next ten minutes, then send her away, and

call for pen and paper and begin all over again with my own hand.

The truth is, the writing man of my sort needs a conspiracy of circumstances to set him going. Put a clock in front of him, tell him that the thing must be finished within a certain time or his newspaper will miss all its trains and there will be the devil to pay, and he will do it. Like a candidate in an examination he will do twice as much in the given time as in any other conditions. Under extreme stress of circumstances I have even done that most abominable thing—dictated to a shorthand writer and produced twelve hundred words in twenty minutes or so. But unless I am working under this compulsion in a newspaper office, I use all the time there is, and at the end of it am capable of tearing up and starting again, which of all practices is most abhorred by the working journalist.

What would happen to me if, after twenty years of writing at home, I were put back in the old *Westminster Gazette* office and set my daily task of writing twelve or thirteen hundred words between ten and a quarter past eleven in the morning I dare not think. Even in those days I often spent the first quarter of an hour on one sentence and then had to rush all the rest to get through. I doubt whether now I could manage the mere physical act of writing the required number of words in the time, for even that requires practice. I have several disabilities—for one thing a congenital incapacity to use a fountain pen. Though I choose the best kind and fill it to the brim, and take the utmost care to place it in my pocket the right way up, all the ink in it runs out in less than two hours. Whether it evaporates or in some mysterious way is absorbed into my person is more than I can say. All I know is that there never is any ink in it when I want to use it. If I fill it just before trying to write with it, the result is the same. At the top of its form it does about fifty words, then after a few

dry scratches comes to a dead-stop. By shaking and thumping it may be induced to scatter drops of ink on the floor, on the table and even on the paper, but it resolutely and obstinately refuses to write. Then in my wrath I plunge it into the ink-pot if there is one handy, and try to use it as an ordinary pen. But used in this way it is an incredibly bad pen, and as likely as not the ink, which wasn't there a minute ago, will now begin to stream out of it, blacking one's fingers and making great blobs on the paper.

I said I plunged it into an ink-pot, if one was handy, but generally there isn't an ink-pot anywhere. For among the detestable qualities of this creature is that it cuts you off from this homely retreat. The multitude of writers having rashly committed themselves to its care and keeping, there is now scarcely a pen or an inkpot to be found in all Fleet Street. I went the other day into a great newspaper office and, having occasion to write about two hundred words, I asked for pen and ink. The request caused consternation. Half a dozen people rushed forward and offered me their fountain pens. I begged them, as they valued their pens, to desist, and said I must have ordinary pen and ink. Boys began running upstairs, downstairs, along corridors, in and out of rooms, and after about twenty minutes one of them came back bearing a penny bottle with just a dred at the bottom of it, and a battered cross-nibbed pen, which he said he had found in the night watchman's box.

As a matter of fact, ordinary pen and ink failed to solve my problem when the twelve hundred words had to be written in the seventy minutes. Taking pen to ink-pot and back again to paper is all very well when you have plenty of time and may even help to jog your thoughts. But on the level stretch of the seventy minutes it appreciably slackens your pace and makes your arm ache. My solution was finally a relay of double B pencils carefully sharpened

in advance and small sheets of rather rough paper, each of which could be sent to the printer as soon as it was finished. This enabled me to write with the minimum of effort; the pencil just brushed the paper as I went along, and since I write from the shoulder and not from the wrist, I was saved from the wrist and finger fatigue which leads to writers' cramp.

This then is the recipe for writing the old style leading article in the hour and ten minutes in which the journalist of the period was expected, indeed was obliged, to produce it. Three double B pencils, twenty small sheets of rough paper, and the thing was done. Very few modern journalists are required to do this particular thing day after day. The highbrow papers are generally able to give their writers more time, and the popular papers give them much less space to fill. However, there are still emergencies in which the slowest writer is compelled to write fast, so I pass on the recipe lest it die with me. Such reputation as I obtained in the thirty years in which I produced this article on six days in the week (bar holidays) was largely founded on an unceasing supply of the right kind of pencils and paper of a texture which exactly fitted them. One other thing ought perhaps to be mentioned, and that is a large clock with a loudish tick keeping one perpetually reminded of the flight of time. And if in the basement below a machine was perpetually at work winding paper, that also was a good running accompaniment to the movements of pencil on paper.

One day George Moore, who was insatiably curious about the different ways of writing, walked into my room at the *Westminster Gazette* and said he had come to know "how it was done." "It" was the *Westminster* leading article which somebody had told him was written "under peculiar circumstances." Since he seemed really to want to know I told him everything—pencils, paper, clock, etc., and

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explained how these things worked together to the required result. For a full minute he looked at me in silence, then he said, "I don't believe it, don't believe it," and so saying walked out of the room.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OUT OF MY DEPTH

#### I

I OCCASIONALLY review books on political and other subjects about which I am supposed to know something, and the other day by some accident there got included in a parcel of this pedestrian kind an anthology of modern poetry with a request that I would write 1,200 words about it. Eventually I returned the book with a polite note to the editor in which I explained that I was not a literary man and that I had had no practice in the kind of writing which—to judge from my reading of his own paper—the reviewing of such a book seemed to require.

Yet I was tempted to keep the book for a few days while I read it for my own satisfaction, and during the same days I read with rather more than usual attention the criticisms of poetry, painting and music that came my way, just, if I could, to see how it was done. The first rule seemed to be to talk of each of the arts in terms of some other art. A painting was said to be "remarkable for its musical qualities," a piece of sculpture to be in the key of B flat, a poem to have "a glazing of transparent colour on an opaque foundation," a piece of music to be a "triumphant achievement of the sculpturesque," a piece of prose to be "beautifully draped." Certain words appeared to have specially infamous associations. To say that a thing was "representational" was to blast it irretrievably. The general rule appeared to be that in proportion as a poem corresponded to what seemed to be its subject, or a painting

to what it professed to depict, or a sculptured figure to a human being, it was unworthy of serious consideration. It was further generally taken for granted that the obscure was the profound, and that it was the business of the critic to deepen its obscurity in his attempts to explain it. Finally, I found that some pieces of poetry which I thought charming were quoted with derision, and others which seemed to me ugly or unintelligible received unmeasured praise.

After this preliminary study I returned to the anthology and found it was carefully annotated for the benefit of persons like myself. I should classify the pieces contained in it under four heads. First there were the traditional sort of poems which persons like myself can understand without notes. Next there were those to which a few notes were an aid to understanding, and for these I should welcome the notes as I should those of an intelligent commentator on any poet. Thirdly came those which seem to be perversely obscure and contorted, but which could be made sense of, as one makes sense of a rather corrupt Latin or Greek author, with the aid of ingenious conjectures. Fourthly came a class which entirely defeated me, and the meaning of which I should never have guessed without the notes. Of these I will only say, without expressing any opinion about their literary merits, that whatever game they are playing, they don't play it fair. Cross-word puzzles which no one could have solved without the answers defeat their own object. They may amuse those who set them but are an exasperation to those for whom they are set.

## II

No one can desire to put writers in any strait waistcoat ; their art is the supremely difficult one of subduing thoughts to words, thoughts which are chords of many notes in harmony or discord, to words which are single notes that

have to be played one at a time. Great writers have a touch on this instrument which gives it a richness and variety beyond reach of ordinary performers, but even they must in the end observe its limitations and keep in contact with what the ordinary mind regards as meaning, or the result will be a confusion of sounds disagreeable to the ear and conveying nothing to the mind.

In all this I am speaking the language of "common sense," and I shall be asked what has the mystic and wonderful thing called poetry to do with common sense? And yet, if we look back on its history, it is precisely in those periods in which it has expressed the common feelings of the many that it has reached its highest flowering. Plato describes all Athens listening in rapt attention to the Greek tragic poets. The great poetry of the Bible has never lost its hold on the multitude. Shakespeare was within the range of all who could read and write in his day, and probably of a great many more who could only listen. When poetry retires within itself and speaks in cryptic language to an *elite* it ceases to do its work—the work which has been its glory in all the ages—and passes out of the main stream into a literary backwater, where a little group of writers write for their own satisfaction and confirm one another in oddities and obscurities that take them farther and farther from the common mind. It is a characteristic of all the arts that those who practise them in this way become eccentric—i.e. removed from the centre—unless they keep touch with this common mind. When they lose this touch, they fall in love with their own eccentricities and boldly claim them to be the touchstones of true poetry.

## III

If the layman may venture to put in a word about modern æsthetics, it is the confusion surrounding the

words "representational" and "non-representational" which has landed criticism in so much of its present difficulty. That art may be more than nature is an undisputed truism. No one denies that a painter may see more of the truth in any given scene than John Doe or Richard Roe, or that a poet's description of it may get us nearer reality than a house-agent's advertisement. Who would hesitate to choose between an interior by Van der Meer and a photograph, if there could be one, of the same scene? But this does not mean that the artist should turn his back on appearances; it means, on the contrary, that it is precisely his business to deepen and enrich them from his own personality and imagination.

In the jargon of the day the word "representational" has got attached to the dull academic kind of picture which aims at exact reproduction. The reaction from this has taken some painters to the extreme of producing objects which have no recognizable resemblance to anything in existence. A painter of this school shows you a pattern of lines running in different directions or an arrangement of cubes and triangles, and tells you that it is the portrait of a lady or the impression made on him by the face of an eminent statesman. There is no arguing about it; if it is so to him and he can bring others to say that it is so to them, those who dissent can do nothing more than record the fact that it is not so to them. But at the present time the latter are the immense majority, not merely of the uninstructed, but of the educated and cultivated who have hitherto taken pleasure in painting. The painter who follows this line deliberately cuts his communications with all these. Except on the common ground of appearances which they will recognize as corresponding to some form of reality he has no way of appealing to them, and they on their side have no way of testing his assertion

that his creations are significant to him. He and his group must now retire into the little coteries which profess to understand one another's symbols and signals, and since there is now nothing to limit their fancies, there is no extravagance to which they will not go. or which they will not find critics to justify or applaud. So it is with the poet who thinks of his art as a thing of abstractions cut off from what ordinary people call meaning or beauty. To converse in a secret language with a few initiates is not the way of great literature. The originality which breaks new ground goes storming into the open and compels the bystander to take note.

Let us, said Aristotle, pay attention to the experience which we have inherited, for "in the multitude and the years these things, if they were good, would almost certainly not have been unknown, for almost everything has been found out." The modern world may deride the simple belief of the father of knowledge in things having been found out. Yet it may still have a meaning for artists and poets who are handling material which has varied little throughout the centuries. It is unlikely that any generation has made discoveries in those spheres which entitles it to turn its back on the past. It is unlikely that, if the modern forms have the virtues claimed for them, they would not have been discovered by the great masters of painting, poetry and music in former times. That most of them have been discovered, discarded, or used for what they are worth, may very well be argued. Great artists have a genius for picking up any new thing which serves their purpose. But novelty for its own sake has no attraction for them ; it is only the second-rate, the poetasters and the stylists, who pride themselves on being "in the movement." The creative do not create according to a fashion or a theory. They even, as Coleridge said, create the taste by which they

are judged, which means sometimes that they are not understood until they are dead.

Let all those who judge bear in mind that their judgment is not final and that they too may be brought into judgment. But the undoubted fact that some great painters and writers who were thought obscure or eccentric by their own contemporaries have been vindicated by a subsequent generation offers no presumption that young writers who cultivate obscurity or eccentricity will obtain the same reward. Scores of young poets in the nineteenth century drew comfort from the fact, if it was a fact, that Keats was done to death by a quarterly reviewer, and hoped that for them also to be slaughtered by a critic would be a passport to immortality. There was unfortunately what logicians call an "undistributed middle" in this reasoning. It did not follow that because Keats was slaughtered by a reviewer, every victim of a reviewer would be a Keats. Nor does it follow that because Donne or Blake or Browning wrote obscurely, obscurity will make a young poet into a Donne or a Blake or a Browning. It is far more likely to make him into a bad poet and an inferior writer.

I think we may safely follow Aristotle so far as to say that great art has never made the breach with common sense which some modern critics seem to think a virtue in modern art. By common sense I mean the judgment of reasonably educated people, say like myself, who have been accustomed to read and take pleasure in poetry, ancient and modern. We look back over our reading and find nothing which defeats our understanding in the same way as a considerable proportion of this modern poetry. Our fault, no doubt, the writers will say. Possibly, and in that case we ought not to grudge that kind of writing being provided for those who like it and understand it. Nor do we. What we question is the drive of criticism which is

urging so many young writers in this direction, which speaks with contempt of us and our standards, and belittles all efforts to please us and give us satisfaction. Are we always to be told that we don't know what poetry is and have no right to offer an opinion about it? May we never express our view that bad writing remains bad writing even when it is cut into lengths and labelled "poetry"? I think it is about time that both writers and readers should bestir themselves to throw off this tyranny and encourage a recall to simplicity and lucidity. Literature is a house of many mansions. There is room in it for the bizarre and the macabre; it should always give shelter to the exquisite and the complex, to that which is born before its time or out of time, but may presently come into its kingdom. But none of these should be permitted to crowd out the natural and instinctive expression of thought and feeling in language understood by the many, for on that its power and influence have depended in all the great ages of poetry. It is only the second-rate who regard literature as the secret of the few.

A young man who took me to task for something I wrote in this sense a few months ago says that I mistake the meaning and origin of what I call obscurity in modern poetry. It is, he says, the business of poetry to reflect the state of contemporary thought, and since that thought is at present in an exceptional state of obscurity and confusion, poetry also is bound to be (or to seem to me and my kind) confused and obscure. It must reflect the current agonies in politics and religion, or it will be merely a form of escape from life. Why not go the whole length and say, "who drives fat oxen must himself be fat." It is undoubtedly true that great poetry reflects the mental agitation and turmoil of the contemporary life; it is in that sense part of the agonising of the human mind to explain itself. But, in so far as it performs its part, it seeks to interpret, to clarify,

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to impose a meaning on what is obscure to the commonplace mind, which is as nearly as possible the opposite of reflecting obscurity in its modes of expression. That its thoughts will be deeper thoughts than are obviously intelligible to the commonplace mind and to get the value out of it often needs effort and concentration—this is of the nature of poetry. But this does not mean that obscurity has any value in itself or that it is other than a blemish unless it is the result of a genuine effort to express ideas which, though difficult, are worth expressing. The poets who deal in obscurity seem too often to impose it wilfully, as a sort of literary fashion, which conceals a minimum or a positive vacuum of thought.

## CHAPTER IX

### POETRY OLD AND NEW

#### I

Is there any standard of literacy or artistic criticism which the living generation may accept from its predecessors and apply to the judgment of current art and letters? One would suppose not, if one looked only to the varieties of opinion in successive generations. What one generation thinks excellent, the next dismisses not merely as less excellent but abominable and contemptible. Each as it comes on the scene speaks with a peculiar bitterness of its immediate predecessors. The Edwardian turns upon the Victorian, the Georgian upon the Edwardian; a young writer tells me that at the present moment there could be no greater offence than to confuse a "neo-Georgian" with a "paleo-Georgian." The confidence with which one literary sect or one group of painters passes judgment on another can scarcely have been surpassed by *Æacus* and *Rhadamanthus* at the top of their form. "Tosh" and "tripe" are the favourite words with which the condemned are pursued by those who are on their heels. It never seems to occur to any of them that they too may be consigned to the limbo of "tosh" and "tripe" by the next in succession.

We old ones can only bow our heads and watch while wave succeeds wave. To come out into the open is to expose ourselves to the fate of the prophet without the

prophet's remedy of calling bears out of the wood. Nevertheless, we may sometimes confide our thoughts to one another when our juniors are out of earshot, and what I am setting down now is intended to be read by no one who is less than sixty. I had almost said less than seventy years old. Just as films are released for adults and children, so there should be different sorts of writing licensed for different ages.

Let me begin with a confession. I have the same sort of difficulty in understanding some of the judgments of the sixties and seventies as the young men of the day have in understanding those of their seniors. For example, I have just been reading again a volume of Walter Bagehot's "Literary Studies," written in the early sixties. Among them is an essay on Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning written in the year 1864. The criticism of Tennyson still seems to me admirable. It deals carefully and justly with "Enoch Arden" (a poem which the young modern would dismiss as "tripe") and judges it to be a good specimen of the "ornate" and "literatesque." The same essay contains an admirable digression on Milton, and chooses some of the best Wordsworth for quotation. But when he comes to Browning, Bagehot leaves me gasping. He is a very just man and he admits that Browning "has given many specimens of the poetic art within its proper boundaries and limits." He quotes a large part of the "Pied Piper" as an example of the right observance of these limits in a poem dealing with the fanciful and the bizarre. But he also quotes as an example of grotesque ugliness, which can only appeal to an "insane taste," that wonderful poem, as it seems to me, "Holy Cross Day." Having quoted a large part of it he just leaves it without any further comment as though the mere reading of it would to a reader of "sane" taste, be a sufficient condemnation.

Perhaps in face of the terrible persecution of the Jews

which has disgraced these times, one reads a little more into this poem than a strict literary judgment would find in it. Even so, I should claim that it satisfied one of the tests of first-class poetry by springing to life in this way on the impact of fact. But, whatever may be said about this, the question which presents itself after eighty years is whether any taste can be "sane" which fails to find beauty in this poem, which is not fascinated by it?

The story is the familiar one of the Jews in Rome who once a year on Holy Cross Day were obliged to listen to a Christian sermon, whether with the intention of converting or of humiliating them remains in doubt. The poet describes them "rumble and tumble, sleek and rough, stinking and savoury, smug and gruff," being driven to the church where

" Higgledy, piggledy, packed we lie,  
Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,  
Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,  
Worms in a carcass, fleas in a sleeve,"

they murmur to one another what "old Ben Ezra the night he died said to his sons and his sons' sons":

" God spoke, and gave us the word to keep,  
Bade never fold the hands nor sleep  
'Mid a faithless world—at watch and ward,  
Till Christ at the end relieve our guard.  
By His servant Moses the watch was set;  
Though near upon cock-crow, we keep it yet.

" Thou! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,  
By the starlight, naming a dubious name!  
And if, too heavy with sleep—too rash  
With fear—O Thou, if that martyr-gash  
Fell on Thee coming to take thine own,  
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne.

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“ Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.  
But the Judgment over, join sides with us !  
Thine, too, is the cause ! and not more thine  
Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,  
Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed !  
Who maintain Thee in word, and defy Thee in deed !

“ We withstood Christ then ? Be mindful how  
At least we withstand Barabbas now !  
Was our outrage sore ? But the worst was spared,  
To have called these Christians, had we dared !  
Let defiance to them pay mistrust of Thee,  
And Rome make amends for Calvary !

“ By the torture, prolonged from age to age,  
By the infamy, Israel’s heritage,  
By the Ghetto’s plague, by the garb’s disgrace,  
By the badge of shame, by the felon’s place,  
By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,  
And the summons to Christian fellowship.

“ We boast our proof that at least the Jew  
Would wrest Christ’s name from the Devil’s crew,  
Thy face took never so deep a shade  
But we fought them in it, God our aid !  
A trophy to bear, as we march, Thy band,  
South, East, and on to the Pleasant Land ! ”

Let the modern reader judge for himself. I can only say that if I were a Jew I should have these lines by heart, for I know of no profounder summing-up of the Jewish case against the persecuting Christian. But nevertheless, the fact stares us in the face that in the year 1864, one of the most intelligent of literary critics failed to see its beauty, failed to feel the thrill of such lovely lines as “ Thou ! if Thou wast He, who at mid-watch came, By the starlight, naming a dubious name,” thought it all to be merely a wilful exercise in the grotesque, to be condemned, literally *sans phrase* and at sight ?

Well we have to believe it, for it is there in damaging

cold print, the judgment of a writer who in another connection repeats with the appropriate comment the famous opening sentence of Lord Jeffery's review of Wordsworth's *Excursion*—"this will never do." If I were a literary critic which, thanks be, I am not, this essay would frighten me, for it would set me wondering whether I, too, might not be guilty of the same sort of obtuseness in judging the poetry of these times. For me to say to myself that I was quite sure—that there could be no two opinions among people of "sane taste" that some new product was grotesque nonsense—would evidently be no good, for in the year 1864 I find a critic of high intelligence saying almost exactly this about a poem which for me has a singular haunting beauty.

Other things, too, he says, evidently reflecting the opinion of his time, which seem to me a strange mixture of perversity and insight. He says that after a "wild moment of dangerous fame" Byron has passed into "lasting oblivion." He speaks as if the great burst of romantic poetry at the beginning of the nineteenth century—"noisy poetry," he calls it—had been a bad influence on the poets who came after. It had left a "vague conviction that poetry is but one of the many *amusements* for the enjoying classes, for the lighter hours of all classes. The mere notion, the bare idea, that poetry is a deep thing, a teaching thing, the most surely and wisely elevating of human things, is even now to the coarse public mind nearly unknown." To this he attributes the fact that poetry was "down"—very much down—at the time he was writing. So undoubtedly it was, though scarcely for the reasons here suggested. But within twenty years it was very much "up." In the late 'seventies and early 'eighties there was a company of acknowledged poets exercising on their generation an influence to which there is nothing comparable in these times. Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Swinburne, William Morris,

even the lesser stars like Rossetti and Coventry Patmore—we used to read them all and waited breathlessly for anything new that came from their pens. By "we" I mean all intelligent and reasonably well-educated people, young and old, in these years. In this respect there was no gulf between the poetically initiated and the common crowd. Gladstone could say without absurdity that Tennyson had "written his songs upon the heart of the people," which, I gather, would be thought libellous by some of Tennyson's successors. We knew by heart, and quoted to one another long passages from our favourite moderns, and they became in this way part of the common currency of talk and writing.

The moderns tell us that we were sadly mistaken in our objects of admiration. For the moment I am not arguing about that. I am only saying that as a fact they did exert this influence, and that as I look back on it I still think it to have been a good influence and that its absence in these days is the lack of something very important in the lives of ordinary people like myself. My juniors may, of course, answer that they do not share my feelings or my admirations, and that they are getting their satisfaction in another and better way. But this does not alter the fact that for me and my kind, who are still the great majority of the reading public, poetry is, as Bagehot said in 1864, "down," and that it is likely to remain down, if certain new theories about the writing of poetry are generally accepted.

With the warnings before me of the frailty and transitoriness of literary judgments I will as far as possible keep my opinions to myself about any given piece of modern poetry. But that need not deter me from asking certain questions about the methods avowedly adopted in writing this poetry.

In spite of the common saying that there is no disputing about tastes, all the world from the days of Aristotle till now has disputed about them. The poet may write his poems in the lightness of his heart without troubling whence they come or whither they go, but if his poems survive, there is always somebody in waiting to provide them with a theory. There is nothing new about this, but there does seem to be something new in the modern attitude about theory. Whereas in past times the theories have generally come after the event when the poet has been long dead, they now come hand in hand with the poetry and are even said to prescribe the way in which the poet should write. Wordsworth and certain of the Lake poets may be quoted as having set the example in this respect, but their theories were little more than simple statements of the manner in which they intended to write, e.g. that they intended to use simple language and deal with homely human situations, instead of using artificial language and dealing with pseudo-classical subjects, as they supposed the writers of the eighteenth century to have done. Even so, the conscientious pursuit of this method had, I think, a bad as well as a good influence on their poetry. A return to nature was wholly good in the circumstances of the time, but a return to it in this particular way led to a good deal of deliberate dullness, not to say bathos, which most of them, and especially Wordsworth, would have avoided if they had let nature work its will upon themselves.

The modern theorists go far beyond any such simple statements of method. They regard poetry—or the kind of poetry they have in mind—as largely independent of what ordinary people call “meaning.” On a previous occasion I have quoted on this subject and may quote again Mr. T. S. Eliot,<sup>1</sup> who is rightly regarded as the leader of this school :

<sup>1</sup> “The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism,” by T. S. Eliot, page 135.

"The chief use of the 'meaning' of a poem, in the ordinary sense, may be (for here again I am speaking of some kinds of poetry and not all) to satisfy one habit of the reader, to keep his mind diverted and quiet, while the poem does its work upon him: much as the imaginary burglar is always provided with a bit of nice meat for the house-dog. This is a normal situation, of which I approve. But the minds of all poets do not work that way; some of them assuming that there are other minds like their own, become impatient of this 'meaning' which seems superfluous, and perceive possibilities of intensity through its elimination. I am not asserting that this situation is ideal; only that we must write our poetry as we can, and take it as we find it."

In this passage modern poetry seems to be divided into two classes, one with the minimum of "meaning," as ordinary people understand the word, and the other with (in that sense) no meaning at all. Mr. Eliot regards the former as the "normal situation," but he has no objection to the latter, if the poet so decides. "We must write our poetry as we can, and take it as we find it."

Let me try to explore a little. What is the thought behind these words? It is, I suppose, that poetry has a certain hypnotic effect, which is a thing apart from what it says, or appears to say, to our intelligence. There is, of course, truth in this. All good poetry reinforces its appeal to the intelligence by an appeal to the emotions. But equally all good poetry gives intelligible expression to the emotions. In so far as poetry fails to balance these requirements, it is lost. On the one side it will topple over into prose, on the other into nonsense. The best example in the English language of poetry, which has eliminated meaning, is "'twas brillig and the slithy toves,'" and I doubt if any modern poet will write a better. There is other poetry which is on a fine edge between intelligence and emotion, but its triumph consists in keeping the balance, as Shakespeare supremely does.

The boundary between no-meaning and nonsense is perilously thin. By emptying poetry of meaning a vacuum is created into which the new critics rush, bringing bits and ends from everywhere—Marxism, Freudism, cubism, surrealism, and whatever comes after that. The most obscure of French, Russian and German poets are said to be the highest models for English writers. Not infrequently we are called upon to admire specially what ordinary folk think of as depravity. I have before me an article by a modern critic, who says that the three "*writers*" of the nineteenth century are Baudelaire, Flaubert and Rimbaud, and that, beside them, the English Victorian poets, Tennyson, Browning, etc., "appear amateurs, incomplete and immature, talents hamstrung by respectability." The three Frenchmen are alone said to have explored in a courageous way the alluring underworld which respectability calls sin. Another Frenchman is said to be a "competent opium poet," and it is suggested that he should write a commentary on Rimbaud, who also smoked opium, so that we may see the observations of one literary drug addict upon another literary drug addict. In the old days we should have called this decadent, but if the underworld is to be the subject of poetry, this part of it ought of course to be explored. The creeping things that are to be found on the other side of a stone have, from this point of view, a special fascination for the modern poetical explorer.

## III

These "competent opium-poets" who wander about in an "amoral" underworld—not to be always remembered "immoral," for that is a prejudicial word implying standards

of what the respectable call right and wrong—seem to me a handy example of where the new theories lead. The literary chaos which follows when the old ideas of meaning and beauty are discarded very easily gets involved in the moral chaos in which everything is equally edifying, and the least edifying, according to the old standards, become the most tempting subjects to an exploring poet. Hence the peculiar combination of ugliness and obscurity—again I am using the words in their old-fashioned sense—which men of my age are apt to find in some of the poetry of their juniors.

But Mr. Eliot, whom I have quoted, will not go so far. He is, in his way, an ascetic, and his later work is suffused with religious mysticism. For this reason I have heard his juniors reproach him as a lost leader, or, to use the now fashionable term, an “escapist.” He has refused to follow where he originally led, shrunk from the bleak and stony waste lands which they are so courageously exploring, turned back to find safety in comforting illusions. If it is not presumptuous to say so, this charge seems to me unfounded. It is much more probable that Mr. Eliot’s mysticism has from the beginning been at the back of his theory. He thinks of poetry as something dimly heard, like the voice of the priest intoning Mass at the high altar, by the congregation in the church. It is less than music, more than recitation; as a whole it has an effect on the listener who is susceptible to it, which is different from that of any words or phrases or combination of words and phrases contained in it. This, I imagine, or something like it, is what Mr. Eliot has in mind in the passage I quoted just now, and if practised with skill it is one of the legitimate effects of poetry. Mr. Eliot himself practises it with great skill in his poem, *Ash Wednesday*, and in certain passages of his play, *Murder in the Cathedral*. Its appropriate setting is either a church or a stage which give the effect of words

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resounding, and echoing, rolling about, coming forward, fading away.

Even so, it must not lose touch with meaning, or it might as well be an incantation by a Jain priest in a temple at Amritsar or Ahmedabad. Listening to one of these, you realize the world of difference between sounds which have no meaning for *you* and sounds which suggest familiar thoughts and ideas. To found a deliberate theory on the idea of poetry without meaning or only with such meaning as to keep the (unintelligent) reader quiet " while the poem does its work on him," is to confuse the boundary between the two things, and, so far as Mr. Eliot has done that, he has, I submit, had a disastrous influence on his followers. The very few who have the skill and taste to do the deep and delicate thing that he may be presumed to have in mind, do not need the instruction ; the others are only too likely to take it as licence to set down any words that occur to them in any order they choose ; and to assume that if the sounds give them pleasure, sense and syntax are of no consequence.

### IV

The situation becomes worse when this teaching is accompanied by a departure from all the traditional forms. The writer who is compelled to conform to certain patterns of metre and rhyme will have studied his art, however unsuccessfully, and have been compelled to think out his thoughts. In the course of this discipline the majority will probably have discovered that they are no poets and have been mercifully eliminated. But the neophyte who plunges into what is called " free verse " is cut off from all standards. If he chooses to say that what he produces

is poetry, you dispute with him at your peril. He will tell you that he *knows* and you do not, and the measure of its excellence will be literally, for him, the extent of its departure from what you think good. The approach of a new poet bringing his latest work for the inspection of the old reader is generally in the manner of someone "trying it on the dog"—the dog, in Mr. Eliot's sense of the word. The dog is expected to manifest surprise and indignation, as old dogs do when confronted with novelties, and there is great disappointment if he remains unmoved.

Not long ago, when I had visited an exhibition of modern painting, the young man who was keeping guard at the door asked me what I thought of it. I said, on the spur of the moment, that I should very much like to have a little private list of the number of leg-pulls in the show. The young man was pained and horrified. He literally jumped into the air and asked me whether I seriously meant to impute that the Firm which had brought these pictures together was practising a fraud on the public. Could I imagine that it would risk its long reputation and high character on this kind of imposture? The mere suggestion, I was given to understand, would, if made in the presence of witnesses, expose me to an action for slander. I don't want to slander anyone, but here is precisely my dilemma. A certain amount of the new painting, the new sculpture, the new poetry, has exactly this effect on me—I find it extremely difficult to believe that it can have been intended seriously. In my haste and bewilderment I fly to the possibility hinted in all innocence to the young man of the picture gallery. But this gets me into worse trouble than ever. Can I possibly suppose that the practitioners of this high and serious art are capable of joking—that they have what I, in my philistine way, might call a sense of humour?

In an article I read recently, Mr. Desmond MacCarthy quoted a Frenchman, a certain M. Jean Paulhan, as having said : " We (poets) do not directly speak out our thought. We speak our words ; we no longer need to think, the phrases are enough." It was, I think, another Frenchman who said that the really true poet no longer needed to write. It was enough for him that he existed. This, it seems to me, is the logical and safer conclusion for the poet who seriously believes that poetry need have no meaning, as we others understand that word. As one of those, I will only make one observation. The moderns claim that theirs is a deep and difficult art far surpassing that of the rhyme-sterner and and metricist. To me—and this will completely give me away in their eyes—much of it looks absurdly easy. There are even moments when I think I could do it myself. No doubt a gross presumption, but the trouble is precisely, for me, to know the difference between the sort of thing I can do and the sort of things these writers do. Andrew Lang once said, when showed some verses of Stevenson's, that he could do ten like that before lunch. That is the dreadful thought which crosses my mind on reading certain kinds of modern poetry.

And why bother about it ? Why, ask the moderns, should you not let us go our way, while you go your way, producing your heavy prose in the old-fashioned " mandarin " style, which is as repulsive to us who live in the post-Joyce age as our poetry is to you ? What harm do we do anyhow ?

It is a fair question, and I will try to answer it. I regard it as a great loss that poetry should have so much less influence in these times than when I was young. Why is this ? Not, I think, for lack of poetic talent. Taking up almost any anthology of modern poetry, I find in it beautiful passages, passages that thrill and fascinate, which prove

that the writer has a real poetic gift. But in far too many, as it seems to me, I find that the writer cannot get to the end of even a short piece without imparting into it some twist, contortion or obscurity which puzzles and repels an average intelligent reader, and spoils its perfection as a whole. It is as though a child having done a fair copy deliberately filled his pen with ink and scattered blots over it.

Why does he do it? I seem to get the clue when I read the criticism of this poetry. It is precisely these blots that the modern critic picks out for special praise. If the poem were without them, he would either leave it unnoticed or dismiss it as "traditional" and "sentimental" if he refrained from calling it "tosh." In this way the young poet gets confirmed in these tricks, and by degrees they become so much second nature that he is unable to write in any other way. He wins loud praise from fellow initiates, but by the same token becomes less and less intelligible to those whom he would call the vulgar, but who include the great majority of reasonably well educated people to whom the poets of previous generations appealed. Often he seems to be talking in a secret language—a sort of literary Morse code—to which only his fellow operators have the key.

Meanwhile everything that can be labelled "traditional," which means everything that appeals to the larger public, is passed with a sniff. This brings discouragement to all who have an impulse to write poetry that appeals to the common understanding, i.e. in the manner in which almost everywhere it has hitherto been written. If there were in these days any young Wordsworths, Tennysons, Matthew Arnolds or Brownings, the modern critic would tell them to go home and learn the tricks of the free-versifier before they came again. He has no use for the rhymes and metrical forms which in all ages have made it easy to memorize poetry and hand it on in the form of quotation.

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These, in his view, are the vulgarization of an art which is intended to be the treasure of a few. So it may be, but it threatens to be the death of poetry as an influence in the world. It has caused poetry to be, as Bagehot says, "down" in these times.

## CHAPTER X

### OUR PROFESSION

#### I

I WAS asked the other day to say something, for the benefit of my juniors, about the entry into our "profession." Had it been entry into journalism I should have been puzzled where to begin. For who in these days is not a journalist? Eminent ecclesiastics, great scientists, best-selling novelists, Harley Street physicians, beauty specialists may all claim the title and share it with the erring mortal who on his appearance in the dock is so frequently "described as a journalist."

The modern newspaper is boundless in its hospitality, and to all these its door is open. But the "*profession*" is a very different matter. The man who follows journalism as a profession must, like all other professionals, give his life to his calling, which is the service of newspapers or periodicals dealing with events from day to day or week to week. In talking to young men who have asked my advice I have often found nothing better to say to them than just this: "If you are a journalist you will be a journalist and you will be unfit for any other occupation." Unfitness for any other occupation is a good negative test in the choice of most professions, but it is supremely so in the choice of journalism. The real journalist needs qualities which would be extremely unserviceable in any other calling. He must have the vagrant mind which passes easily from

one thing to another ; instead of minding his own business, he must be insatiably curious about everybody else's business. He must not do to-day what he can put off till to-morrow, for, if he does, his work will be out of date before he gets it into print. He must be ready to turn night into day, to take everything as it comes and be content with the best he can do in a given time and space, and not, like sentimental Tommy, bite his pen over the *mot juste* and be left biting it when his paper has gone to press. Jowett said to me, when I was a boy at Balliol : " You must learn to concentrate ; you'll come to no good if you let your mind wander all over the place." It was just this habit of letting my mind " wander all over the place " which gave me such qualifications as I have to be a journalist and made me unfit for any other occupation.

The young man who proposes to make journalism his profession must decide first of all whether he has this sort of disposition. Otherwise his career will end after a few years of worry in a nervous breakdown. But supposing him to be reasonably sure on this point, what next ? Fifty or sixty years ago almost every young man of my kind who was thinking of journalism went armed with an introduction to John Morley, then famous as editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Fortnightly Review*. I myself went trembling and, as recorded in a previous chapter, came away sorrowful. His advice was that I should get out of London, find a footing in some provincial newspaper office and there learn my business. After that I might begin to think of being a London journalist.

I had the great good fortune of being able to follow this advice, and within a year, at the age of twenty-three, I found myself editor of the *Eastern Morning News* at Hull, and there for the next five years I remained, learning my business at, I hope, not too great disadvantage to its proprietors and readers. Without disparaging what may be

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done in other ways, I still am strongly of opinion that a newspaper office is the best of all schools of journalism. At Hull I did almost every job that could be included in the widest definition of journalism. I was editor, leader-writer, sub-editor and reporter in turn. Though I had never learnt shorthand and never tried to learn it, I could report most speeches sufficiently and often without taking a note. I tried my hand at book-reviewing, and even theatrical criticism. All the accounts were brought to me, I sometimes cadged for advertisements, and if there was a dispute with the printers in the composing room my arbitration was generally accepted. I went on 'Change and checked the prices of the local products, learning incidentally that a fractional mistake in the price of some of them (or for that matter in the "starting price" of some obscure animal) did damage to the paper beyond anything that I could repair by my highbrow articles. Shipping was an inexhaustible interest, and the grievances of fishermen and seamen and the allegations about the cattle trade required personal investigation, sometimes on stormy nights in the Humber. There was also the report of the Medical Officer of Health that ten thousand houses in the borough were "unfit for human habitation." Most of these were visited and reported upon with a view to rousing public opinion, and that was enough work for spare time.

This was the entry into the profession for me in my time, and I can think of none better for any journalist at any time. "You have had an Oxford education," said the proprietor of the Hull paper in a kindly way, when I first came on the scene, "and it will take you some time to get over that." It did take rather longer than he hoped. But my Hull experience helped. It gave me a view of life as lived in a busy community, its interests and amusements, the degrees of importance which different things called news had for different circles. When, after five years, I

came to London, and for the next two years had to support myself mainly by free-lance journalism, I found that I had a range of subjects to write about which gave me an advantage over many of my competitors. Finally, when I got my first permanent appointment as assistant-editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, I was chosen in advance of several who had better literary qualifications than myself, on the ground that having had this provincial experience I could safely be left in charge when my chief was away.

Comparing these times with those, I am afraid it must be acknowledged that the door of entry is now narrower. While the number of newspaper readers has enormously increased, the number of whole-time professional journalists is constantly declining. "Amalgamations" play havoc with the profession. Every time two newspapers are "amalgamated," one staff or the greater part of it is dispensed with. What with the decrease in the numbers of newspapers and the contraction of the space given to politics, political journalism, as a whole-time occupation, must be very nearly the smallest of the professions to-day, and any young man who is thinking of it had better have sidelines to supplement politics. The number of targets at which the free-lance working from the outside must aim has diminished in the same proportion. In the two years in which I lived by free-lancing in London there were seven evening newspapers, most of which took contributions, especially "notes of the day," from outside; now there are only three. On the other hand, there is a market for short stories and "features" which there was not in my time. Here the free-lance gets the advantage of the greater size of the modern newspaper. He may obtain a proficiency in this kind of journalism, which may make him, in fact, a professional, and a reasonably well-paid one, though he seldom sets foot in a newspaper office.

To men and women pursuing free-lance journalism there

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are certain things to be said which, though obvious, are often forgotten. They must endeavour to lay out their lives as punctually and precisely as if they were working in a newspaper office. A daily portion put into circulation among a group of newspapers may bring a good average living for a young man, even if a large part of it is rejected. Above all, he must keep writing, whatever the discouragements. Young men who would have to spend five years in learning their profession, if they were setting out to be doctors, barristers or solicitors, may be heard complaining bitterly when their first efforts in journalism are not immediately accepted. They expect to be paid while learning their job, instead of paying others to teach them. Among the qualities necessary to a journalist is that of accepting rebuffs with patience. I have seen a newspaper proprietor tearing an article of my own into fragments and throwing them contemptuously into the waste-paper basket. In the year 1886, when I was a young man with a reasonable conceit of myself, I received a letter from the managing editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, who had invited me to show him specimens of my leading articles, saying that they not only did not come up to the standard he required, but that they showed no sign that I should ever be able to reach that standard. I would say to young men and women that the secret now, as always, is to keep on writing and not be discouraged because at the beginning a large part of the product is waste. That is how they learn their job. But if they have it in them to write, good writing will sooner or later find its mark.

Some parts of the work in a newspaper office must be mechanical in the sense that it consists of arranging, displaying and cutting into shape material provided by others. This, too, requires skill and is excellent training in news sense. The young journalist should never think himself above being a sub-editor ; he is fortunate if he can get an

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entry into the profession that way. But he should always from the beginning try his hand at some original piece of work and not be afraid to submit it to the editor. The good editor is always looking about for talent in his staff, and it is just in this way that men mount in the profession. It is a great profession of constantly increasing importance in the modern world of propaganda and loud-speaking. That it should be efficiently manned by men of ability and sincerity who take their work seriously is of the highest national importance.

## CHAPTER XI

### BRAZILIAN COCK

#### I

“BRAZILIAN cock, aged about sixty-five, cause of death senile decay and pneumonia”—this was the verdict after the autopsy and inquest. On the whole consoling. The ornithiatrist is of opinion that we have nothing to reproach ourselves with. His diet was well-chosen ; what was done at the end was all that could have been done. There was no trace of psittacosis. We had heard that some of his kind lived to be over a hundred, and he had seemed to be in such good health and spirits until within a few days of his death that we had not been alarmed about him. But his death, according to the expert, was quite normal. There are grey centenarian parrots, but Brazilian cocks seldom live to be more than sixty, and the state of his plumage—bright green wings lined with crimson and canary-coloured waistcoat—showed that he had been comparatively well up to the time of his death.

He came to us when he was twenty-five years old, a present to my wife from a schoolboy whose father he had offended, and who was not allowed to take him to school. The boy had him from a sailor in the port of Whitstable ; where he had been till then we could never discover, but his language bore traces of familiarity with the mercantile marine. His wings had been cut—an indignity which,

though it contributed much to his safety, we could never have brought ourselves to inflict on him. But the fact that he couldn't fly away enabled him to enjoy a great deal of liberty which would otherwise have been impossible. His big cage was always open ; he came in and out of it exactly as he chose, his favourite attitude was on top of it, where he slept, dozed or strutted about according to his mood, and from which he addressed his many recitals and exhortations.

The next twenty years he spent at my wife's hospital at Tankerton, where there were generally fifteen men and boys recovering from operations at the London Hospital. This was exactly the society he liked. Extreme sociability and a morbid dislike of being alone were always a part of his character. Women he tolerated, and if they approached him cautiously, he would shake hands with them and resist the temptation to bite them. He preferred to have them in a room rather than no company, but what he loved was a number of boys and men making a noise together. He would join in the conversation by repeating a sentence that took his fancy—not quite verbatim but recognizably—and winding it up with an “Oh, yes !” Laughter greatly excited him. He would rock, scream, roar with laughter, sitting back and gasping for breath at the end of each bout.

The little fifteen-bed hospital expanded into a 350 bed war hospital. There he was in his element, and if any creature ever did what was then called “war-work,” he did it all day long. “Do let us have the parrot” was the word which came again and again from the Ward Sisters, and in a few minutes he changed the deepest depression into laughter and chaff. There was no mincing of words between him and his audience ; his marine vocabulary came back to life and found new and rich expression on their instruction. They taught him to sing “God Save the King” and call for three cheers. He was not always quite

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clear in his mind when these manifestations were appropriate. One painful day he mistook a funeral for a bean-feast and shouted "Hip, hip, hooray" as it left the hospital gates.

He had a strong sense of dignity. Whoever teased him or took liberties with him did so at their peril. He would wait till they were up and out, lying unsuspicious on the hospital lawn, and then make a dash for his tormenter and draw his blood. Public opinion was nearly always with him on these occasions. The others said it was fair, that his victim had brought it on himself. In general his preferences were for large ugly men with big horny hands, and if he ever behaved foolishly it was in a sort of maudlin affection for one of these. If you passed between him and one of these adored objects, he lost his temper and screamed with rage. It made no difference to him whether they returned his affection or not; his fidelity to them was unshakable.

The hospital remained open for chronic and incurable cases for two years after the war, and he was indefatigable to the end, brightening the last days of many who were beyond recovery. Then he came to live with us in the Weald of Kent, still in the prime of life, and by this time highly accomplished and experienced. He missed the voices of the hospital, and made loud protests when left alone, but he soon established his place in the household, and had one of his special infatuations for a gardener. We could now observe his methods and qualities more closely. He had an extensive vocabulary, as birds go, but what distinguished him from all other birds I have known was his skill in adapting the same phrases to his different moods. He had three ways of saying "Good morning," one a snapped-out short "M'r'n'ng," another just the ordinary indifferent salute, the third accompanying a deep bow with each syllable ceremoniously extended.

His choice of one or the other was an almost infallible sign of the mood in which he had woken up. He sat behind me in the library in which I worked and had various ways of letting me know when he thought himself neglected. He would begin with "Scratch Polly," then "Scratch poor Polly," then "Scratch poor old Polly," which generally had the desired result. He had different voices for almost every member of the household; to one he would gabble in an unintelligible low bass, to another he would lay his beak close to her ear and speak in a long confidential whisper which had exactly the effect of communicating a secret, on no account to be told to anyone else. He would insist on being noticed and complained audibly if anyone came into a room and went out without saluting him.

Did he understand the words he was using? Living with him it was impossible to think otherwise. He said "Good morning" in the morning, "Good night" when he wished the cover to be put on his cage, and "Good-bye," waving a claw, when you went out. When certain callers came he would say "Good-bye" almost as soon as they had sat down, and then it became necessary to explain that he spoke as a fool, but in fact he very often showed remarkable penetration in expressing our unspoken thought. If they lingered, he would parody their conversation in his deepest bass voice—which also required explanation. On the whole it was safer to put him elsewhere when callers were expected, unless they were children, when his welcome was uproarious. Almost any child could set him dancing and singing.

Of songs he had a considerable repertoire, and he generally had two quite different ways of singing them, one in his natural voice, which was a slightly raucous baritone, the other in a treble falsetto. "Cock of the North," "Polly put the kettle on," "Round and Round," "They call me

pretty Polly" were his favourites, and he took great pains in practising them both ways. When he made a mistake he invariably went back to the beginning and tried it all over again. He loved listening to music on the wireless, and would hang over it with his head outstretched through a whole Beethoven Symphony. Occasionally he would chime in with one of his songs, or try to catch a phrase of the music as it went along. In the last year of his life he could be heard when sitting alone trying to remember the slow movement of the Fifth Symphony and getting very near it.

He was an accomplished mimic and had several set pieces which would start at any moment. These also were of two kinds—some carefully practised, others which seemed to have been instantaneously recorded on the tablets of his memory. He took enormous pains with his imitation of the bark of a little black mongrel and would go over it again and again until he thought he had got it right. But the instantaneous pieces were the most successful. There were the two boys shouting at one another—too far away for the words to be distinguished, but an extraordinary reproduction of shrill voices in the open air. There was the conversation between two women punctuated with screams of laughter, after which he fell back gasping for breath; there was the child sobbing with a voice trying in vain to comfort it, with "Don't cry"; there was a long piece from hospital days, an altercation between two orderlies winding up with "Corporal says tell Cook Avenal won't come"—the last three words repeated three times; there were more lurid pieces, perhaps memories of the foc'sle, abounding in unprintable epithets. All this flotsam and jetsam from his long and variegated life was constantly coming to the surface regardless of the context and the company.

His unflagging interest in the life about him, and his

unceasing efforts to amuse and entertain entitle him to the name of philanthropist, for he was in the literal sense of the word a lover of humankind. Few who bear that name have added so much to the cheerfulness of so many people in a life of sixty years. Yet he had his faults and I am sure he would not wish me to disguise them. He was both wasteful and fastidious about his food. He would throw half his regular diet away in searching for the particular seed that he seemed to prefer on certain days of the week. He would search the tea-table from the top of his cage for the cake or toast that appealed to him, and when his mind was made up it was useless to offer him anything else. He loved apples and pears, but if Cox's Orange pippins or Comice pears were to be had, he would not look at anything else. His temper was gay but uncertain. There was almost nobody in any household whom he had not bitten once, and some he would always bite if they were rash enough to expose themselves. I was very intimate with him in the last years of his life, and he would let me pick him up and pull his tail and ruffle his feathers, but now and again the temptation to give me a nip was too strong for him. Then he was immensely amused at my "reactions" and would sit back, screaming with laughter and shouting "Naughty Polly." Whether he really took pleasure in my pain, or it was merely that my behaviour on these occasions appealed to his sense of humour was a point on which I was never quite certain. But now that he has gone I give him the benefit of the doubt. There is much to be said for other domestic creatures, but I have never known one who so visibly devoted himself to my entertainment, who was so punctual and polite in all the little courtesies, who had such a vivid personality and so many ways of expressing his thoughts and moods. When an animal says "Good morning" to you when the day begins, "Good night" when it ends,

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and "Good-bye" when you go away, he puts himself on a footing which is special to him and to you. This old friend did that and so much more that I cherish the memory of him with a peculiar affection.

THE END



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